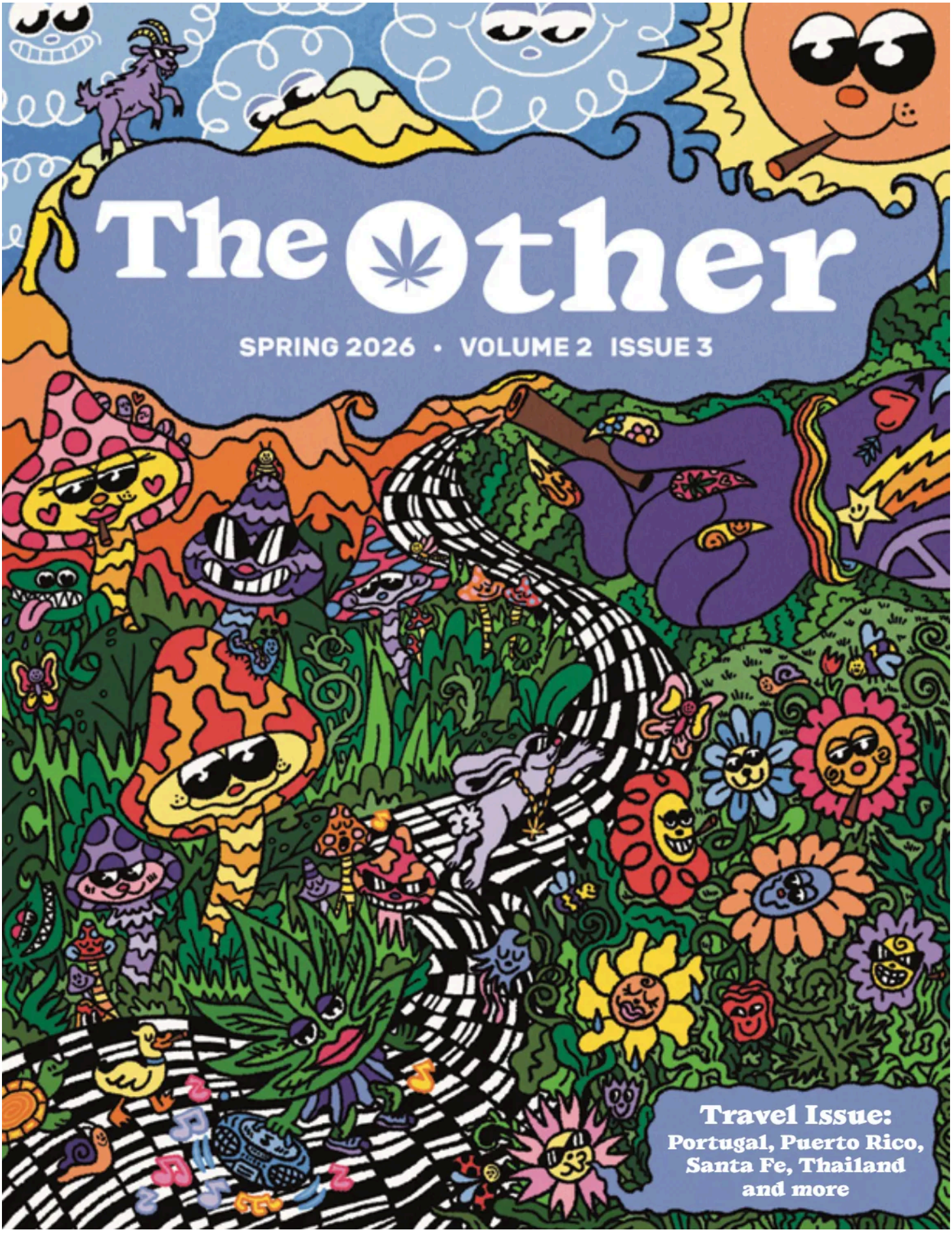
The Other
SPRING 2026 • VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3
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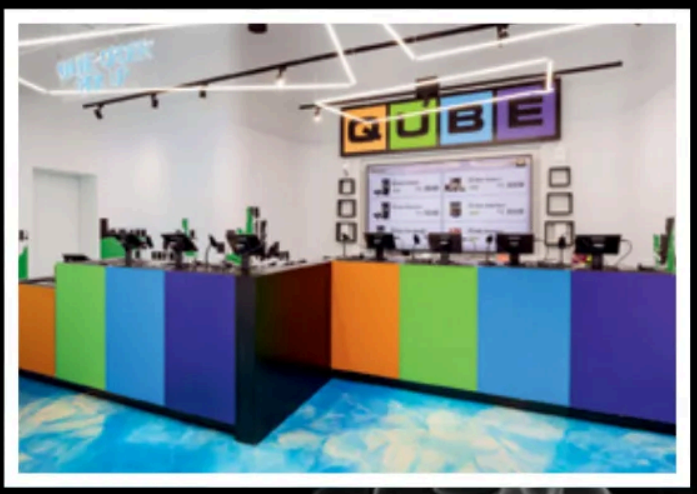

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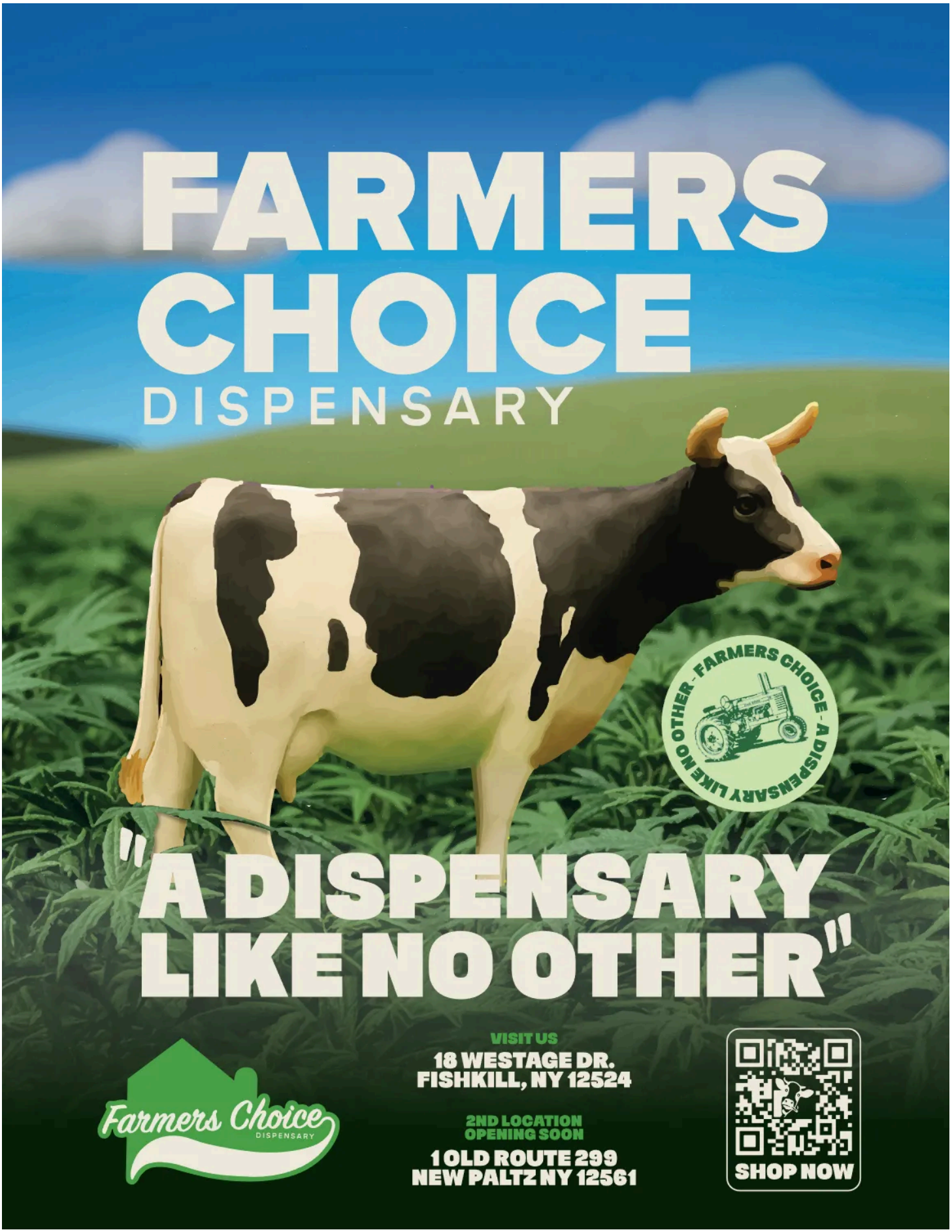
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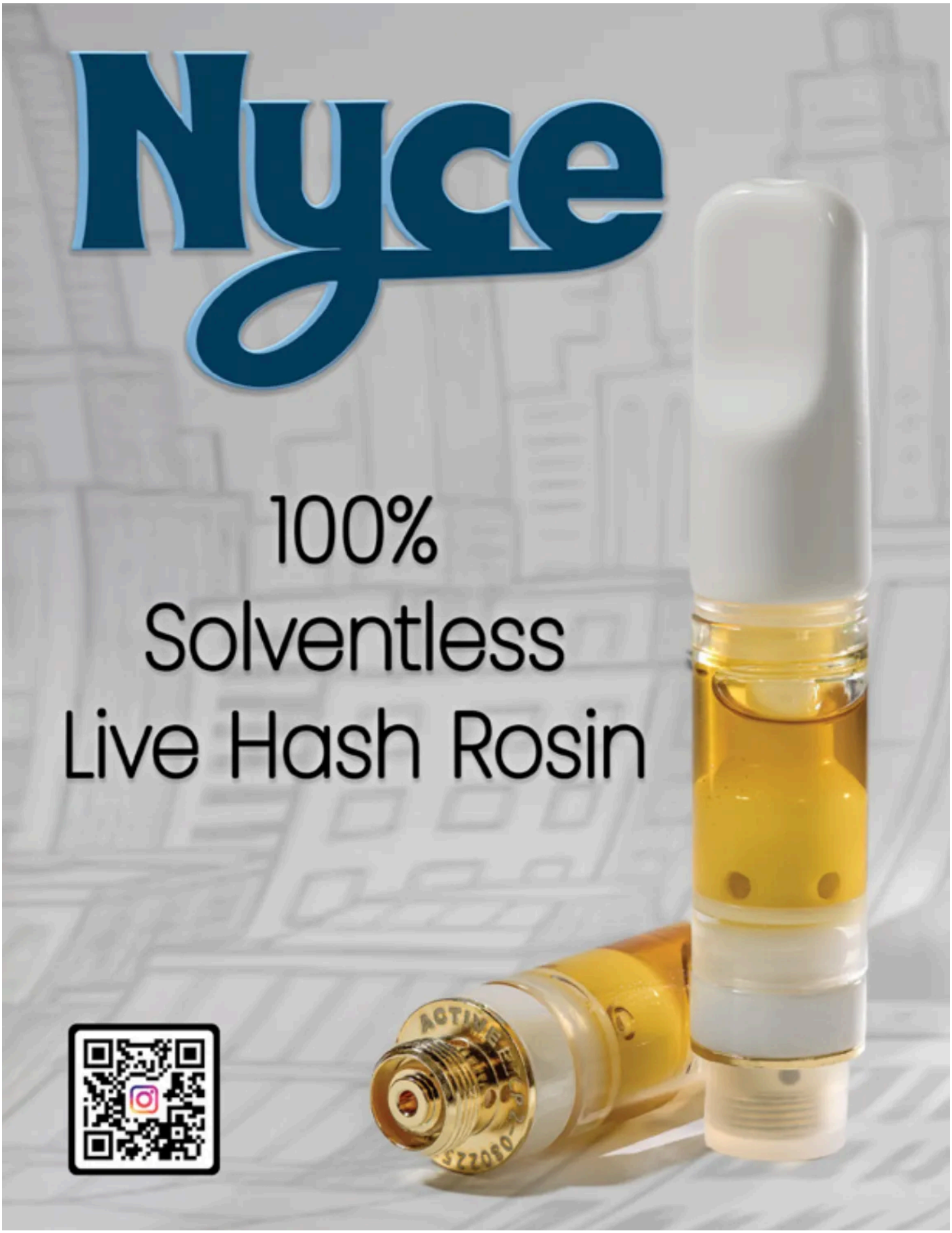
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Why 'The Other'?

The Other takes its name from ***The East Village Other***, a pioneering 1960s counterculture newspaper. Like our namesake, which amplified marginalized voices, we celebrate cannabis culture's evolution from the fringes to the mainstream. Our name reclaims and honors the journey of the cannabis community from "the other"—once stigmatized and hidden—to a position of growing acceptance and legitimacy.

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CONSCIOUS MUSINGS

600 Doors and Counting

Faster Growth Than Any Other Cannabis Market

by Peter Shafran

Hold up. There are now more than 600 licensed cannabis dispensaries in New York State. Let that sink in for a second.

When we launched The Other Magazine, we covered the first handful of dispensaries to open in the Hudson Valley like they were moon landings. Because they were. Every opening was a milestone: a moment where the abstract promise of New York's legal market became a real storefront, real jobs, a real place in the community. Now there are over 230 open in New York City alone, more than 80 spread across our nine-county Hudson Valley coverage area, and more than a dozen on Long Island. That's before the spring wave.

The market hit $1.7 billion in adult-use sales in 2025, a tenfold increase from 2023. The Office of Cannabis Management announced just this month that the first seven weeks of 2026 have already clocked $250 million in sales, putting New York on pace for $2.6 billion this year. For context, that's faster growth than any cannabis market in the country right now. Word from OCM's acting director: New York could be bigger than California by 2030. California, people.

But numbers are just the backdrop. What's more interesting to us, and what this issue is really about, is what's happening inside those stores, on those farms, and in the communities where this plant is taking root. In the Hudson Valley, the story continues to be about quality: boutique grows, small-batch genetics, and the kind of craft culture that built this region's reputation in food, wine, and music long before cannabis was in the picture. In New York City, it's about access, equity, and what it means to build a neighborhood business in one of the most competitive retail environments on earth.

Six hundred doors and counting. We'll keep knocking.

Consume consciously,

Peter Shafran
Publisher

HANDPICKED

What's on my radar this season.

A Perfect New York Afternoon
Brunch at Barney Greengrass, then a walk across town to Little Island, windy enough to keep the crowds away, which honestly made it better. Ended up at Market 57 for coffee and a wander. Then, on the way home, a stop at the HighLine in Hastings-on-Hudson. From the High Line to the HighLine. You can't make this stuff up.

Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville, at Nublu
A century of cannabis culture told through live music. Grace Galu, Duv, and the band bring Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville to Nublu on April 27. Read the article inside.

Ravens View Genetics: Garlic Budder
I got my hands on this Garlic Budder (GMO × Fortune Cookies) pre-roll from Ravens View Genetics. Hits that savory, creamy, pungent-in-the-best-way terpene profile. Fast uplift that settles into heavy body relaxation. An evening smoke, full stop.

By The Numbers:

610 Adult-use dispensaries statewide (March 2026)

230+ Open in New York City

80+ Open in our nine-county Hudson Valley coverage area

14+ Open on Long Island (Nassau + Suffolk)

$1.7B In adult-use sales in 2025 (10× increase from 2023)

$2.6B Projected 2026 total (OCM, March 2026)

56% Of all adult-use licenses held by Social & Economic Equity businesses

The Other

TRAVEL ISSUE

SPRING 2026 • VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3

Beyond Borders

Cannabis Legalization Models Across Three Countries

by Veronica "Vee" Castillo

Beyond San Juan

Three Spots to Experience Puerto Rico

by Amy Gordon

Santa Fe

From Ancient Cave Dwellings to Massages That Will Send You into the Vortex

by Margaux Lushing

40

Near and Far

Festival Apeeal

by Pasquale Zinna

50

Pack Light, Fly High

Travel Gift Guide for the Elevated Explorer

by Ranch Guerra

ABOUT THE COVER

Madisun Redfeldt is a multidisciplinary artist and storyteller exploring the messy side of being human. Working across textiles, painting, and sculpture, her work fuses satire with sincerity to spark conversations about the things we're told not to talk about. Her current focus, Party Animals, uncages the elephant in the room and sets it free... turning hush-hush into LOL. Through humor and satire, Madisun invites people who don't see eye-to-eye to come together, talk it out, and realize they're not so different after all.

MORE

Retail Profiles
P. 17-20

Product Reviews
P. 22-26

The Pride of New York
by Kassia Graham
P. 30

High Standards
by Herb Barbot
P. 52

420 101
by Steve Bloom
P. 58

Bud of the Valley
by Alan Greenwald
P. 62

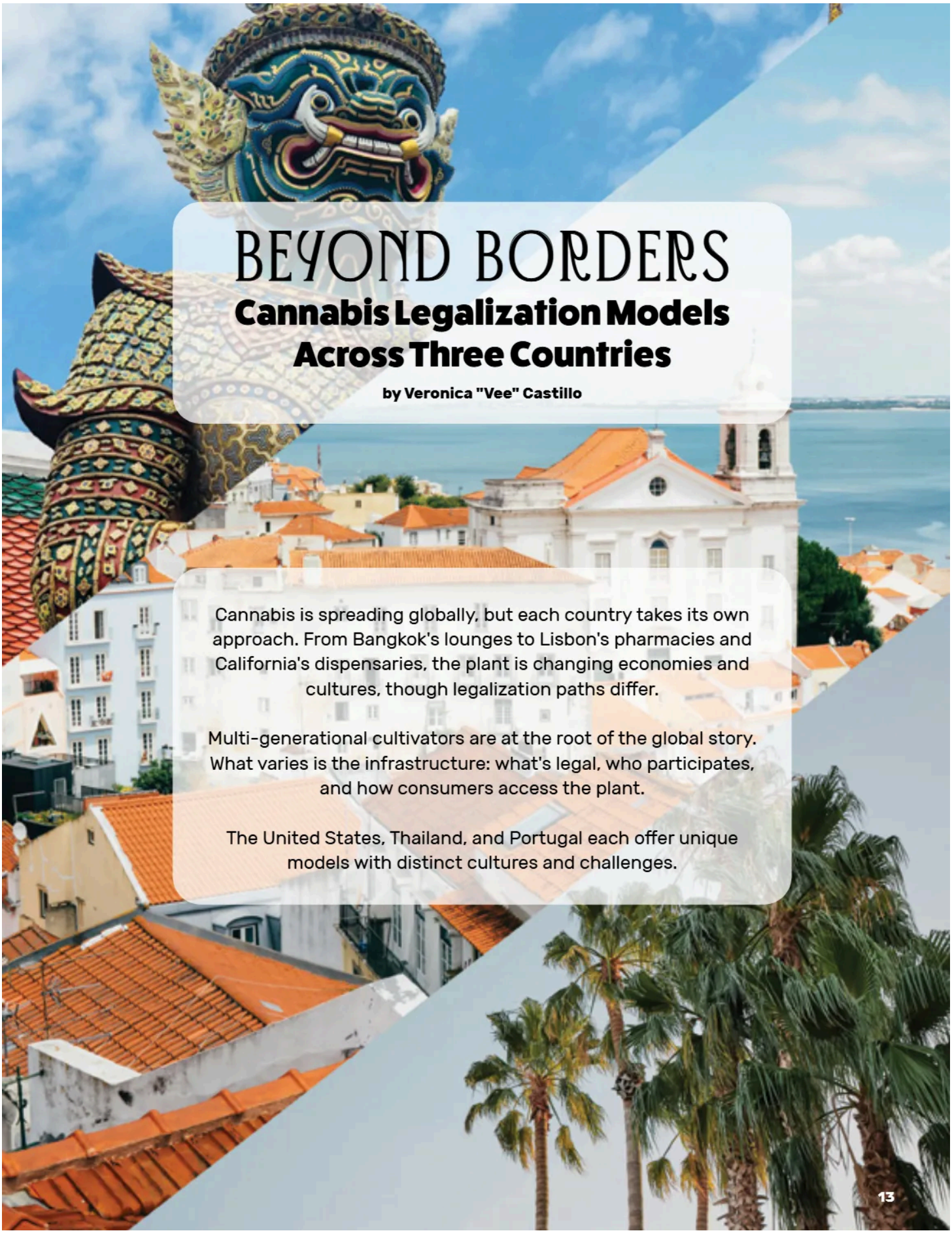
29
Staying Rooted on the Road
Rituals for Staying Grounded While Traveling
by Asa Angel

32
Centerfold
Datura
by Jacqueline Maravilla

36
The Mix
A Selection of Cool Happenings
by T he Other Team

54
Psychedelics and Cannabis
Catalysts of Journeys Within
by Dr. Manesh Girn

56
Psychedelic Art Therapy
At The Art of Integration
by Juanita Viera



BEYOND BORDERS

Cannabis Legalization Models Across Three Countries

by Veronica "Vee" Castillo

Cannabis is spreading globally, but each country takes its own approach. From Bangkok's lounges to Lisbon's pharmacies and California's dispensaries, the plant is changing economies and cultures, though legalization paths differ.

Multi-generational cultivators are at the root of the global story. What varies is the infrastructure: what's legal, who participates, and how consumers access the plant.

The United States, Thailand, and Portugal each offer unique models with distinct cultures and challenges.

The United States: A Fragmented Frontier

The U.S. is a greenhouse divided. State-by-state legalization under federal prohibition creates headaches for businesses over banking, taxes, and compliance. Cannabis remains federally illegal, though 38 states have legalized medical use and 24 allow adult use, creating a limited state-based model with narrow interstate opportunities and thin profit margins.

"After decades in California cannabis, I reached a point where overregulation, crushing taxes, and the inability to operate across state lines made it nearly impossible to think globally," says Monica Garcia, founder of Cloud Eleven, LLC,. "Innovation was being replaced with compliance survival."

"As an American, being cognizant of the limitations in the US market initially limited my perspective about what was possible," says Shane Edmond, founder of Munchy Merchy. For Shane, reform runs deeper than business: "As a Black American, I have a nuanced understanding of how this plant became such a cultural phenomenon globally, but also how and why it came to be so heavily stigmatized and legislated even to this day. So at this point, reform is a matter of restorative justice, not just progress for profits." That stigma shapes the fragmented U.S. model.

Thailand: From Full Legalization Back to Medical-Only

Thailand legalized cannabis in 2018, the first in Asia. By 2022, cannabis was decriminalized and dispensaries opened across major cities. In 2025, the government restricted use to medical only, but decriminalization remains.

For Gaurav Sehgal, founder of Siam Green Cannabis Co., the shift was less dramatic than outsiders think. "Thailand has a unique history with cannabis, marked by harsh penalties despite deep cultural roots," he explains. "Beach towns have reggae bars with Bob Marley murals. In the countryside, elders add cannabis leaves to soups."

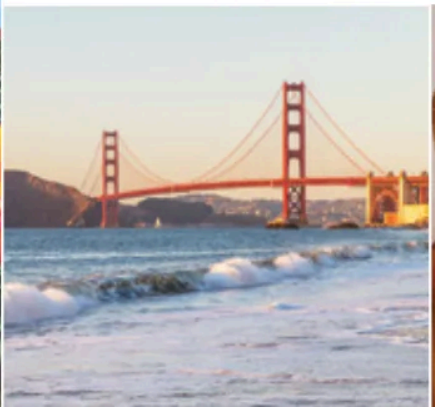
Thai Traditional Medicine uses cannabis in many concoctions. "The recent change isn't a cultural shift, but a move toward less taboo, more open acceptance," Gaurav notes.

The real problem came from regulatory missteps. "The biggest mistake was when the government allowed literally anybody to apply for a cannabis license for 3,000 Baht, under 100 USD, with just a rental agreement and a farm purchase agreement," Gaurav says. "It was way too early to open it up this wide."

When the industry opened, Gaurav saw "a very grungy cannabis scene; owners selling and consuming from the same jars, dim lighting, moldy products." His professional background in food and beverage helped him identify the gap. "The goal was to offer a retail experience that wouldn't intimidate anyone, giving us the opportunity to destigmatize, educate, and provide high-quality, safe cannabis."

Now, as regulations tighten, Gaurav sees consolidation ahead. "What I see happening is players joining forces or being purchased by larger players. Standards will rise, and with that, education, the industry will become more mature and steady."

Unlike the U.S., Thailand's infrastructure elevates the cannabis consumption experience in key ways: medical cannabis can be shipped domestically via mail, removing friction from access; patients can travel across the country with their medicine, paperwork-free; international export is possible with proper licensing; and a single address can house a dispensary, consumption lounge, and bar. Meanwhile, the U.S. is still weeding out how to cultivate a cohesive market nationwide.



Portugal: Decriminalization Without Commercialization

Portugal decriminalized possession of all drugs in 2001, reducing overdose and HIV deaths. Cannabis remains uncommercialized: no dispensaries, no legal sales, no recreational market.

Medical cannabis is available through pharmacies, not dispensaries. "It's a completely different game, especially in sales and marketing," says Steven Arthur George, a writer and consultant in Portugal.

Portugal is a cultivation hub for export, but domestic commercialization is unlikely. "After decriminalization, the government seems to believe they did all they needed," Steven explains. "Not treating consumers as criminals was noble, but legal sale and trade is something today's government would never support."

Portugal offers proven harm reduction without incarceration. This framework prioritizes public health over commerce, shaping its cannabis culture.

What Travel Reveals

Infrastructure differences are clear across markets. For Shane, her apparel business finds more placement opportunities in Thailand than in the U.S. "We recognized the significant potential to grow our brand because it would create exponentially more locations for us to place our products in Thailand."

In Thailand, Gaurav watched expansion give way to consolidation. Portugal exports across Europe, but domestic consumers have nowhere legal to buy. Many, like Steven, don't see full legalization soon. Emerging markets offer new possibilities. As Monica puts it: "If you want to play internationally, you have to operate internationally."

The dilemma isn't which model wins, but recognizing cannabis is reforming itself internationally. Once-localized cannabis culture now intersects with global business. Cultural priorities are shifting. Cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange are building a broader reform framework beyond any one country.

Operators with global vision aren't just expanding businesses; they're connecting movements and creating a hybrid approach.

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RETAIL PROFILE

The Sanctuary Garden

From the Legacy Market to the Upper West Side

by Peter Shafran

Scan to read full interview

Daron Hudson turned a lifetime in cannabis and social work into The Sanctuary Garden—an open, justice-rooted dispensary built on healing and community.

2610 Broadway, UWS

Founder Daron Hudson points to The Sanctuary Garden's logo—gates thrown wide open. "I didn't want to close the gates behind anyone," he says. After years supervising kids in juvenile detention, he wanted to build something that welcomed people in.

Hudson means it. He's spent three decades in New York's cannabis landscape, moving from teenage consumer to college "weed man" to justice-involved CAURD applicant opening his own dispensary—after helping build the state's first one.

Cannabis found Hudson early. As a teenager, he describes himself as someone who "kind of stayed to myself." Consuming cannabis, he says, "opened me up to talking a lot more and being more energetic." That continued at Buffalo State, where he became "the weed man at the college."

When his grandmother fell ill, Hudson returned to NYC and enrolled at John Jay. "I literally got arrested close to a dozen times for cannabis," he says. Though he avoided conviction, the consequences were real: lost tuition, a lost job, hundreds of hours of community service, and a $5,000 fine.

For 15 years, Hudson worked for the Post Office, then moved into teaching and juvenile detention supervision. His activism continued through nine years on the Housing Works Healthcare Board. When Housing Works pursued a retail license, president Matthew Bernardo reached out looking for justice-involved individuals.

Hudson had his own plans. Ten days before the deadline, he joined the team, helping build New York's first legal dispensary—choosing the location, developing the brand, and procuring products. But he always knew he wanted something of his own.

The path to building The Sanctuary Garden wasn't direct. Hudson originally secured a Brooklyn location, paying rent for a year before the landlord sold the building. Enter Indoor Treez, a group he describes as "some really, really good brothers" with deep roots in the legacy market.

On December 30, they were scouting locations when they spotted a nail salon on the Upper West Side. Hudson walked through on January 1, 2025. By September, The Sanctuary Garden opened with roughly 700 SKUs.

His customers range from 21 to 99. "I have post-chemo, cancer-free customers. I have a customer going through chemotherapy right now. I have a customer with MS."

Hudson is building the DK Hudson Foundation, focused on youth exiting juvenile detention. "I want to go behind those walls, man," he says. "I want to get behind those five doors and start doing some work with some of these kids."

The Sanctuary Garden has already begun community programming: a breast cancer drive, a food drive, upcoming cannabis education events. "My background is education and social work," Hudson explains. "I've been in social work for 20-plus years."

For now, Hudson is focused on the Upper West Side. "Half of the people in this neighborhood don't even know that I'm here yet," he says. "I have lots more new customers to meet."

RETAIL PROFILE

Happy Munkey

From 22 Arrests to NYC's Most Authentic Cannabis Brand

by Ranch Guerra

Scan to read full interview

Vladimir Bautista and Ramón Reyes Built a cannabis empire on the same block where they bought their first ounce—and they're not done yet.

151 Dyckman Street, Inwood | 453 Fulton St., Brooklyn

I've visited my share of dispensaries across the five boroughs at this point. Walk in, browse the menu, chat up the budtender, walk out. Happy Munkey on Dyckman Street is not that experience. Within five minutes of stepping inside, I watched a middle-aged Dominican woman—someone you would not expect to see in a cannabis shop—tell a staff member this place was her "sanctuary."

Ramón Reyes, co-founder, was standing next to me. He didn't flinch. "It doesn't matter if you're blue-collar, white-collar, or a kid from the projects," he said. "They all feel comfortable here."

Happy Munkey—the first legal cannabis dispensary above 125th Street in Manhattan—sits at 151 Dyckman, in the heart of Inwood. Co-founders Vladimir Bautista and Reyes opened it in September 2024. A second location followed on Fulton Street in Downtown Brooklyn, though crushing rent and unlicensed competition forced a temporary closure. On January 30, 2026, Happy Munkey celebrated the Fulton Street grand reopening. These guys don't stay down.

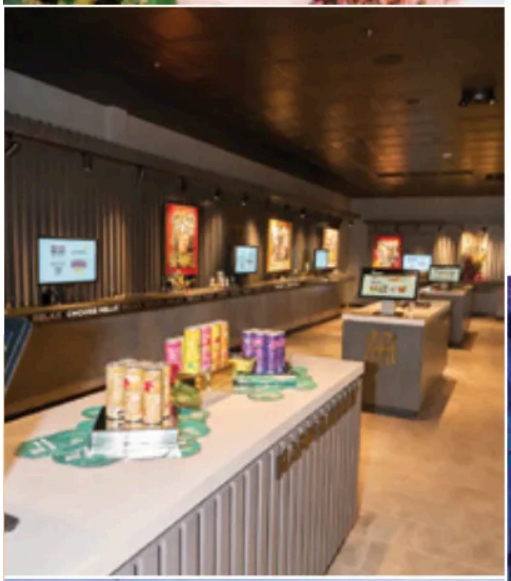
Both men grew up in upper Manhattan—Vlad in Sugar Hill, Ramón in Harlem—during the crack epidemic. Vlad's mother, a Dominican immigrant, raised him and his two siblings on 139th and Broadway on coupons and welfare. As a kid, he ran errands for the local drug dealers—going to the store, the cleaners—because they couldn't leave the block.

"If you ever seen *A Bronx Tale*, I grew up in the Dominican version," Vlad told me. "My area was like Walmart or BJ's for cocaine and heroin. For the whole East Coast."

Cannabis found him at 12 or 13. By 16, the entrepreneurial instinct kicked in. Nobody was servicing the weed market in Sugar Hill—the cocaine guys considered it beneath them. "I'm going to buy an ounce, and if it doesn't sell, I'll smoke it." That ounce turned into a seven-days-a-week operation, noon to 5 AM. The authorities, though, didn't look the other way. Twenty-two arrests. Time upstate.

Ramón's path ran parallel—27 years in the legacy market. In 2017, the two high school friends merged forces. Ramón had visited Amsterdam and seen the café consumption model. They had a 5,000-square-foot recording studio on 38th Street, so they threw a party—weed instead of alcohol—and it took off. Once a month became once a week became seven nights, two to three hundred people deep. Forbes called it the "Studio 54 of Cannabis" in 2019.

Those rooms revealed something. Vlad would sit with guys from the West Village or Tribeca who had never once been arrested for smoking weed. Everyone he knew from uptown had been through the system multiple times. "People called it a broken system," he says. "It wasn't broken. It was working exactly the way they designed it."



COVID shut down the events, but Happy Munkey pivoted to content—podcast, magazine, TV, merch—and fought for the MRTA, the Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act, over a competing bill that would have handed licenses to the highest bidders. Thousands of petition signatures. "The big donors on the other bill were like, 'Who the fuck is Happy Munkey?'"

Ramón frames the stakes: "If the worst that can happen is we get arrested for 24 to 48 hours for changing the trajectory of cannabis in the capital of the world forever, we were okay with taking that chance."

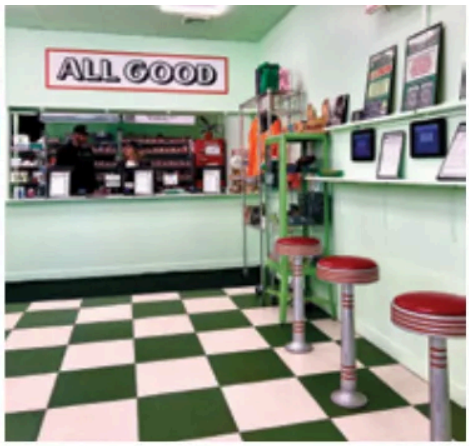
The MRTA became law on March 31, 2021. Both men received CAURD licenses. Investors told them to set up in Times Square or SoHo. Ramón: "To them, it was 'those people.' To us, these are our people. If we didn't do it, nobody else was going to bet their brand on a community like this."

Education is the piece that makes Happy Munkey more than a retail operation. Vlad gave presentations at senior centers and testified before the community board's aging committee. Ramón describes the daily reality: "The number one issue in this industry is education. We're at the front talking to old folks that don't speak English. They're looking at us like, 'Marijuana? No!' But we're saying, 'Yes, cannabis, medicine.' We give them that two-minute moment so they go home and tell their son, 'Don't buy at the corner, there's a licensed place.'"
When I asked what barriers remain, Ramón didn't hesitate: consumption lounges. "Consumption has to be next because that's what New York is known for—the hospitality capital."
Vlad: "Nobody wants to be inside their apartments. Most of the city lives in NYCHA or co-ops where you can't smoke. Where do these people go?"

Ramón's advice for legacy operators trying to cross over is characteristically direct: "You have a PhD and a Harvard degree in cannabis. It's impossible for any white-collar person to be more of an expert than you. Walk into these rooms understanding that you are the expert."

Before I left, I asked the team what they were smoking. Ramón: "Sizzle is hitting. Bouquet is hitting." Vlad rattled off a full schedule—Melted Strawberries by Skyworld for the wake and bake, Lemonati by Sizzle at lunch, Blue Nerds by Bouquet Flowers for the nighttime. José, their lifestyle and promotions guy, kept it simple: "The Runts. My José Rose pre-roll."

If it's New York Cannabis, Happy Munkey knows.



RETAIL PROFILE

All Good

It's All Good in Flatbush

by Ranch Guerra

Scan to read full interview

Shannon Riley and Sean Robinson brought Brooklyn's most thoughtful dispensary to Avenue H.

3405 Avenue H, Flatbush, Brooklyn

There's a moment, walking into All Good Dispensary on Avenue H in Flatbush, where your brain does a double-take. Diner stools. A drive-in marquee on the wall. An actual microscope on the counter for customers to examine flower up close. All Good doesn't feel like a dispensary. That's entirely by design.

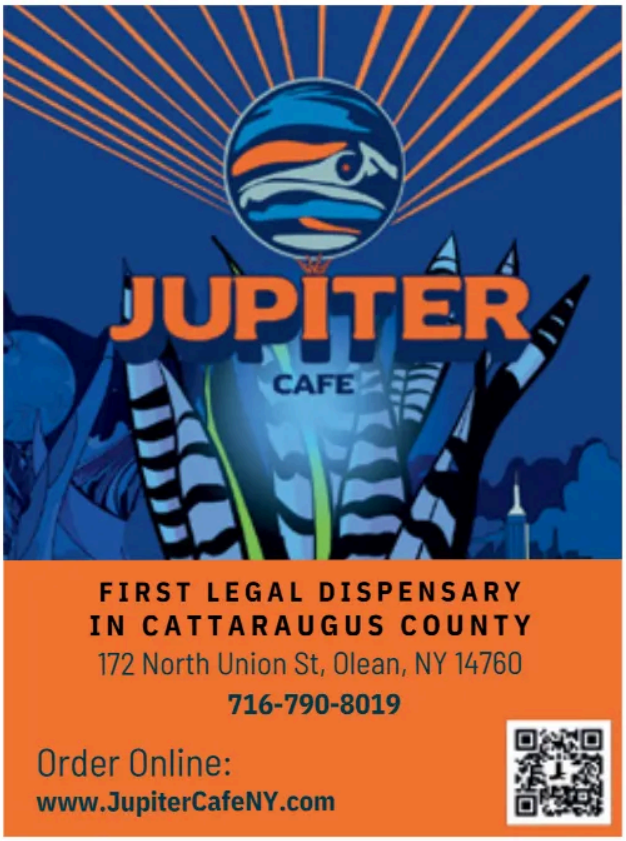
Sean Robinson's origin story reads like a Brooklyn indie film treatment. After getting kicked off his high school swim team for cannabis (killing his scholarship), he joined the Army, cooked in some of New York's best restaurants, burned out, traveled with his dog on a rickshaw, and eventually lived on a permaculture farm in Texas for three years. When he came back to New England and got into cultivation, he was growing outdoor cannabis in Massachusetts well before legalization–paddling a kayak down a river at midnight, soil loaded in the hull, to tend his plants in the moonlight and get out before dawn. That mantra, "It's All Good in the Woods", never left him.

Shannon Riley grew up half Canadian-American, smoking Vancouver BC weed as a teenager and running a hemp jewelry business out of Houston smoke shops at 15. She'd been telling anyone who'd listen that one day there'd be weed stores and that she was going to own one. Her friends laughed. She kept believing. When she found Sean while searching for organic legacy cannabis, the connection was immediate. Together, they built Pharm.NYC as a CBD brand while they waited out the long road to a cannabis retail license, approved in November 2023. They are expanding cannabis culture beyond retail with All Good Cannabis TV, featuring cannabis yoga and original programming rooted in Brooklyn cannabis culture. The brand recently released its first music video produced with Saint6 Entertainment and will be hosting a 4-20 Mic Drop April 20, 2026 showcasing emerging Brooklyn rappers.

All Good stocks no multi-state brands. None. Sean spent the year and a half between license application and approval doing field research; meeting growers, visiting farms, and attending events. "As a legacy East Coast operator, the West Coast has always been our biggest competition," he says. "I want to give every New York-born brand the opportunity to stand up and be proud of New York." Customers who walked in asking only about THC percentage are now having conversations about terpenes and flavor profiles. Some have stopped shopping anywhere else.

The design is Shannon's vision, built by Sean: diner stools that nod to the days when cannabis tinctures were dispensed at pharmacy soda counters, a terpene wall central to the floor plan, a marquee built from greenhouse materials. Every element has a purpose. Shannon opened All Good, partly motivated by the fentanyl crisis hitting NYC high schools. As a parent, she wanted a trusted, tested source in a residential neighborhood that didn't have one. Sean's path runs deeper: he lost his mother at age 2 to a prescription drug overdose and watched fellow service members suffer ill effects from experimental military vaccines. Plant medicine isn't a pitch. It's personal. Both owners support the Last Prisoner Project and hold the conversation about cannabis justice open, always.

Shannon is excited about Harney Brothers' Butterfly Lemonade (made with butterfly pea flower for THC absorption, it turns purple), along with flower from 1Slice and the Hunter Melts suppositories from Upstate Mary. Sean is chasing sun-grown, finally hitting the market after METRC delays, and watching small micro-cultivators come online with impressive output. "People who are on the same path and wavelength as us," he says.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The source for all things cannabis

New York Cannabis Product Reviews

by Stephen Gold

After what felt like the longest and coldest winter in the history of NYC, it's finally passed. I was able to leave my apartment in Astoria and head into the city to hang with some of my favorite dispensaries and try some new products hitting the shelves this Spring.

1

Brand: Good Tide
Product: Grapefruit Sativa Rosin Gummies

After a quick 40-minute ride on the N train, I hopped off at 23rd Street to see my buddy Chris who runs Stoops. What I love about Stoops is how they're always bringing in new products for customers to try. I wanted to get my mind right for a long day of walking and exploring, so I decided to pop two of Good Tide's Grapefruit Sativa Rosin Gummies. These have CBC added to boost the mood, and I knew that after a 30-minute walk, these bad boys would kick in and get me in the right headspace. I'm well on my way to some nice discounts the next time I hit 5th Ave.

2

Brand: Satori
Product: Live Rosin Berry Delight

What better place to spend a spring day than down in SoHo? From Stoops, I walked down Broadway to one of my favorites, The Flowery, located between Broome and Grand. I've always been a fan of how they lay out their stores, with the pops of color and imagery on the walls. I decided my next pick-up would be an All-in-One (AIO) vape and was persuaded to try Satori's Live Rosin Berry Delight. My son's eyes are blue and so was this packaging, so I didn't want any other strain! The Live Rosin really brings out that berry flavor; my mouth felt like it was bursting, taking me back to being a kid getting a brain freeze from a slushy.

3

Brand: Revert
Product: Memory Loss Preground Flower

I headed up 6th Ave to Bleecker for my final stop: Smacked Village. This was one of the first dispensaries to ever open in NY. After a long day on the road, I needed something green to help me push on and eventually calm down. My guy Splash recommended Revert's kief-infused "Memory Loss" homie pack. This half-ounce pack comes with papers and matches, the perfect product for rolling a quick jay without having to lug my grinder around. The sativa strain was the perfect pick-me-up just as my legs were starting to feel the burn. The packaging features custom original artwork by Jean Sotansky via accessories brand ZZZ's.

Stephen Gold of Gold Standard Solutions is an East Coast marketing veteran with experience scaling programs for 1,500+ dispensaries.

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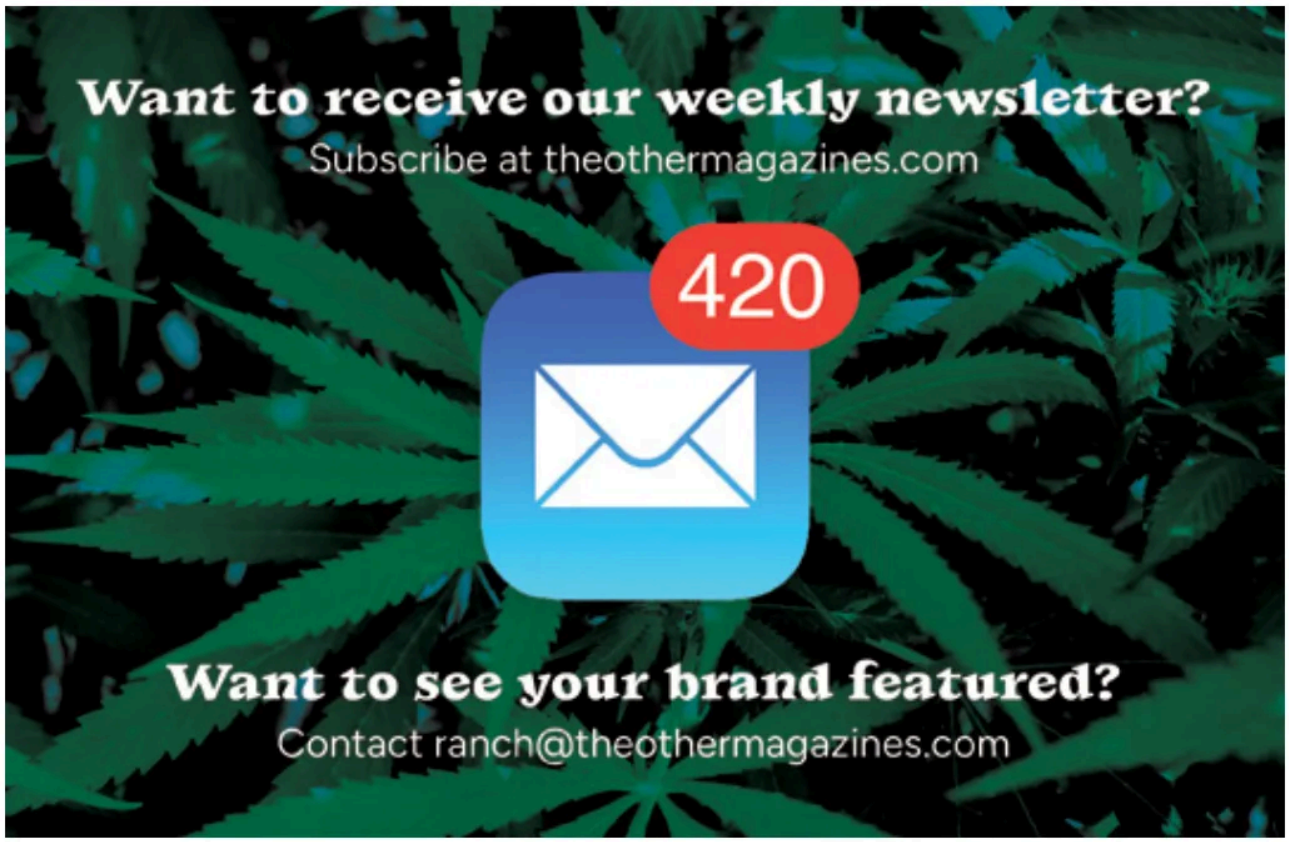
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Circle Hill Strawguava and Trout & Co. GMO

by Queenee

Trout & Co. GMO Cold Cure Rosin

Total THC: 71.47% | Total CBGA: 6.77%

I expected that when I opened the jar, I would be hit with a garlicky, GMO punch. Instead, I was met with a subtle uplifting aroma that lingered behind its earthiness. It was intriguingly different. It wasn't loud on the nose, and it invited a second inhale. After my first dab, I immediately felt a shift. GMO's are typically deeply sedative for me, they usually lock me into sitting on the couch. This batch, however, surprised my ADHD system in the best way, as I had more energy than I normally do while dabbing a GMO.

Within moments, I felt an unexpected lift. Clear, focused, and energized. As someone living with chronic pain, that balance matters. I experienced the signature GMO body effects: relaxed muscles, a wave of calm spreading evenly throughout my body. Yet alongside that calm was a sharpened mental clarity that helped me ease into my day. It delivered relief without heaviness. Experiencing a new level in a profile I thought I knew so well made this an exciting and pleasurable experience.

Rating: 8/10

Circle Hill Strawguava Live Rosin

Total THC: 78.06% | Total CBD: 0.28%

The moment I opened this jar, I was greeted with an instant burst of ripe guava funk but also a surprising, unexpected sweetness. After a gentle whip, the sweetness turned into something even more nostalgic: fruity pebbles soaking in milk, creamy and sweet with a subtle tang underneath. The texture was beautifully whipped, soft and airy, with layers of terpene-rich odor with every stir. You could practically taste the "terps" coming from the jar.

The hit itself was exceptionally clean, smooth on inhale with no harshness, allowing the full spectrum of flavor to shine. I consumed this around 8:30 PM, and by 9:00, I was fast asleep. What followed was the real testament to its potency… I did not wake up until 5:30 AM. For a woman navigating perimenopause, night sweats, endometriosis, and pain-somnia, uninterrupted sleep like that is rare and deeply appreciated. Strawguava delivered flavor, function, and full-body rest.

Rating: 9.5/10

HIGH PRAISE

AMERICAN MADE FUNCTIONAL GLASS

by Kait Carldl

Photo courtesy of MOTA Glass

Let's first get into the name: mota. Mota is a Spanish word to describe a tiny piece of substance. It's also Mexican slang for Marijuana. Quite the fitting name for a brand partly owned by Mexican American, Susie Palencia. She is a fellow advocate, journalist and pioneer in the cannabis industry. Susie and I met in Spain at the global Spannabis cannabis convention, a must-attend trade fair, but I've been following her and her work in cannabis online for years. So naturally, I was thrilled to connect with this "boss babe," and within minutes, I was taking a rip out of one of her gorgeous beaker bongs. I loved the way it felt in my hands. It was durable. It was stylish. It was unlike a lot of the pieces I saw at the conference that year—or any other year for that matter. It was built to last.

MOTA Glass first launched in November 2020 and is made in sunny Los Angeles by a collective of independent glassblowers who believe in an inclusive cannabis community centered around honesty, integrity and respect for cannabis and the people who enjoy it. That matters more than people realize. The truth behind the glass industry is that some companies import cheap glass and pass it off as American made while exploiting workers for maximum profit. MOTA does the opposite. As minorities themselves, the team proudly uplifts BIPOC and other underrepresented artists through collaborations and special projects.

Susie's impact goes far beyond glass. She's also the founder of Latinas in Cannabis, and I've personally seen how much she shows up for the community. From grow workshops to hosting female empowerment brunches—she is really her! Her partner in MOTA, Bobby Lady, is a veteran and serial entrepreneur born to Honduran American parents. Together they created a brand focused on accountability, craftsmanship and community first. And the glass speaks for itself. Their signature 12-inch beaker, handcrafted from thick borosilicate, delivers smooth hits and is built to withstand legitimate everyday use.

Beautiful, functional and proudly American made.

A high praise, well deserved.

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STAYING ROOTED ON THE ROAD

Rituals for Staying Grounded While Traveling

by Asa Angel

Ever since I read *On The Road* and *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test* as a kid, I knew my soul longed to be on the road. Now in adulthood, traveling has proven essential to my personal growth and well-being.

Which makes sense. Travel increases novelty, and novelty is linked to living longer, improving memory, and speeding up learning. Yet, disruption of our daily routines is proven to increase feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and uncertainty.

I have spent months on the road at times, traveling through Asia, Europe, and the Americas. In those travels I came to understand that if I had a set of rituals to bookend my days, and a point of focus to keep me aligned to myself, that my outer world could change without disrupting my inner world.

Whether you are traveling for a few days or a few months, here are a few simple, science-backed ways to stay rooted while on the road.

Create a Traveling Altar

To help you keep a point of focus and sense of grounding

Choose a container like an Altoids can, sunglasses case, or small pouch.
Select 3-5 items to carry with you such as: mala beads, crystals, herbs, tea candles, photos of loved ones, or supportive phrases.
While at your destination you can use these items to set up a small altar.
Additionally, if you are spending long periods of time on a plane, train, or bus this traveling altar is small enough that you can pull it out and use it as a point of focus no matter where you are.

5-3-1-1 Meditation

A morning practice to guide the day

When you first open your eyes take five deep breaths. Deep breaths tell our bodies that we are safe and it can relax.
Next, bring to your mind three things you are grateful for. Some examples are: having a healthy body, sleeping in a cozy bed, or the wonderful food you are about to eat.
Set one intention for the day—one word or a short, simple phrase.
Setting an intention at the start of the day rewires your brain to process opportunity and prioritize action.
Finally, end with one smile for 15-20 seconds. The smile reinforces to the mind, through the body, that this intention is beneficial to your wellness and sets you up for success for the rest of the day.

End of Day Integration

Close the day with clarity and set yourself up for nourishing sleep

Take a moment to reflect on your day: what went well, what you're grateful for, and what you might do differently.
Engage in a 4:7:8 breath by inhaling for a count of 4, holding for 7, and then exhaling for 8. This activates the parasympathetic nervous system and tells the body that it is time to rest.
Lastly, recall one thing you were proud of during the day. This both helps to alleviate stress and directly impacts your perseverance to keep going.

Having a few ritual anchors can create a powerful grounding force, that allows you to expand your consciousness without ever losing your balance.

THE PRIDE OF NEW YORK

by Kassia Graham

Cannabis is booming in New York City, which has driven the culture on the East Coast as well as internationally. Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in NYC have consistently been tastemakers who propel culture, art, creativity, and innovation to new heights. Thus, it's no wonder people who identify as two spirit, lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual, queer, intersex, asexual, and more have gravitated towards cannabis, whether in the pre-existing or legal market.

Here are a few queer leaders building a legacy in NYC that you can support every day of the year:

Breanna Neff
Founder and Chief Food Scientist, Brelixi
Neff is Cornell-trained and IFT certified. They applied their expertise in food science to create the functional cannabis drink brand Brelixi, which utilizes nanotechnology.

Kait Caridi
Influencer and Brand Builder
Caridi has been helping cannabis brands reach new audiences since she transitioned from the medical administrative field.

Dasheeda Dawson
Board Chair, Cannabis Regulators of Color Coalition
Dawson spearheaded getting the legal market off the ground in NYC by supporting dispensaries and local communities with cannabis education via Cannabis NYC.

Lex Corwin
Founder, Stone Road
Corwin has been cultivating sun-grown cannabis in California, now he's bringing that experience back home to NY.

Dae Won Lim
Founder, Sundae School
Lim's Sundae School brand blends Korean tradition with a fresh perspective on cannabis smokewear.

Samantha Martins
Cannabis Educator, Yoga Teacher, and Artist
When Martins isn't helping people find their bliss via a cannabis strain, she's helping them to find balance through her work as a yoga instructor.

Jason E. Starr
Chief Impact Officer, On The Revel
Starr is an advocate and attorney who has helped to shape cannabis policy from the boroughs of NYC to Albany.

Wyatt Harms, Khalil Acevedo, & Matías Alvial
Founders, Flamer
The trio of Harms, Alvial, and Acevedo are putting queer cannabis on the map while serving the community through impactful programming.

Kassia Graham is a queer, nonbinary multi-hyphenate: Cannabis and social justice advocate, digital media strategist, artist, writer, connector, filmmaker, and more.

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Jacqueline
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Jacqueline Maravilla is a multidisciplinary artist whose work navigates dream states, shifting perception, and the fluid nature of identity. Drawing from experiences of lucid dreaming and false awakenings, her paintings intertwine human and botanical forms, where nature emerges as a psychological landscape. Within these imagined environments, she explores transformation, liminality, and the evolving nature of the self.
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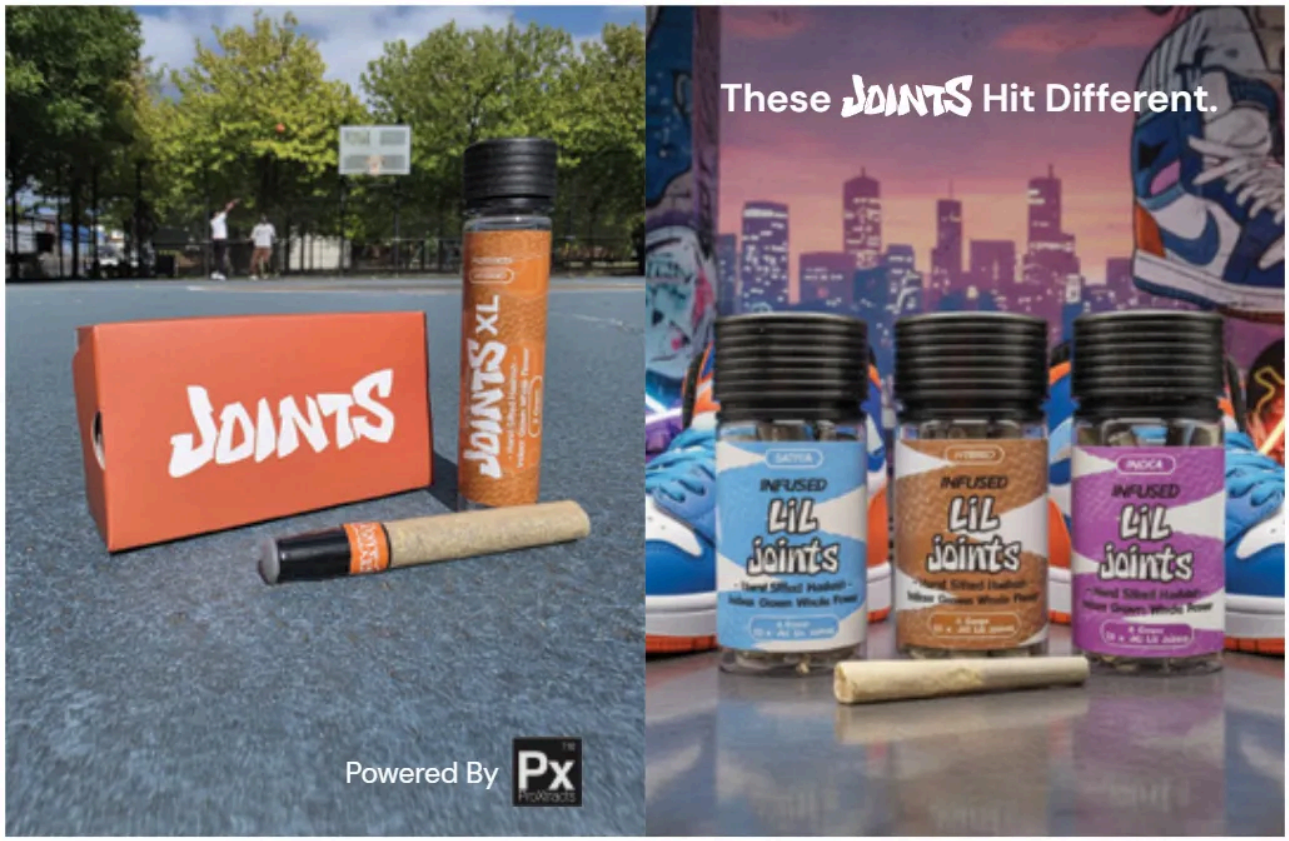
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January 2026 | The Greene Space

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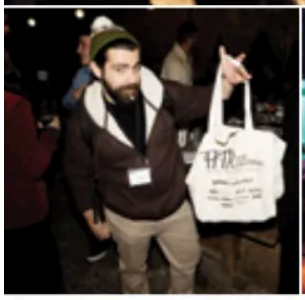
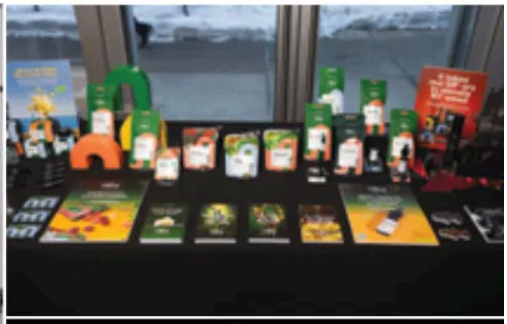
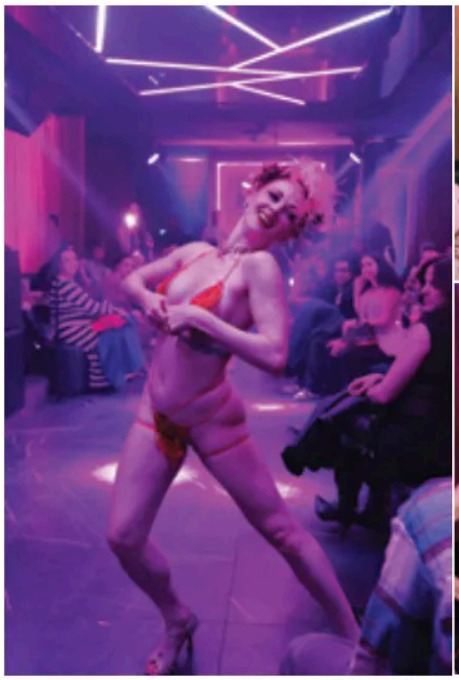
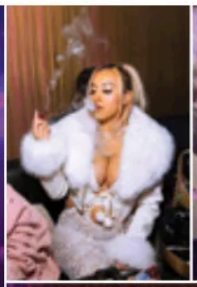


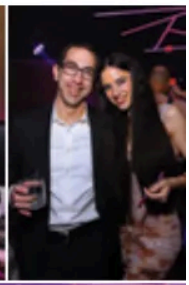


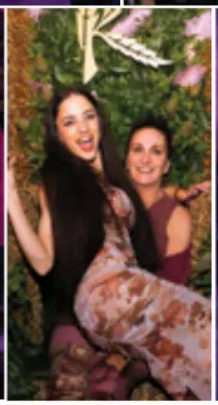
Pinks After Dark

February 2026 | Partake NYC

Photos by Christian Lora

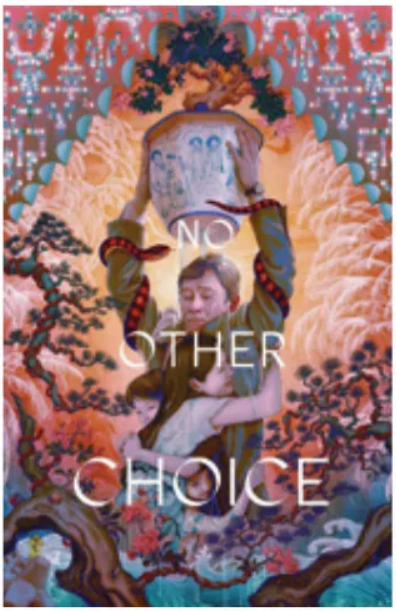




THE MIX

SMOKE & STREAM

by Jon Stone Screenwriter and Film Enthusiast



Courtesy of Moho Film, KG Productions

No Other Choice

For my first smoke, I puffed on Mcflurry, a hybrid cross of Kush Mints and The White, feeling a euphoric, uplifting high with soothing, physical relaxation. I streamed *No Other Choice* from Park Chan-Wook, legendary creator of *Oldboy*. A story about family, work-life balance, and the war some people endure for job security. A dark tone, eased with lighter moments for dog lovers and cello fans. Beautifully shot, brilliantly edited film that nails the "dramedy" ethos that K-cinema thrives on. Hilarious, sad and cerebral. Tension builds seamlessly, leaving the audience gasping and guessing. It hits the nerves but also leaves moments to breathe.

Courtesy of Hera Pictures, Neal Street Productions

Hamnet

My next smoke was the indica strain Queen Mother Goji, a cross of Queen Mother, Nepali OG and Snow Lotus—perfect for sweet, happy relief. I needed it for my next stream, *Hamnet*, which is an emotional tear-jerker. An origin story for the Shakespeare play, *Hamlet*, that unpacks grief, loss and identity amidst the birth of a masterpiece. Jessie Buckley gives us an Oscar winning turn as a mother and partner grappling with love, loss and transformation while honoring the meditative power of art and creation. Chloe Zhao delivers a cinematic opus helmed by stunning performances from Buckley and Paul Mescal, with serene nature shots and a finale that hits on all fronts.

Courtesy of A24

Highest 2 Lowest

My last smoke was Grape Cream Cake, an indica-dominant cross of Wedding Crashers and Grape pie with sweet, creamy berry flavors and a relaxing, euphoric high. My stream was Apple TV's Akira Kurosawa modern-day "remake" *Highest 2 Lowest* from Spike Lee. Denzel Washington shines alongside Jeffrey Wright and A$AP Rocky in another ode to New York City. Set in the hustle of the music industry, this kidnapping caper doesn't hit all the right notes, but is certainly visually stimulating, fast-paced and enjoyable. As usual, Spike Lee shows his endearing love for New York sports, Black stories, and effortlessly keeping audiences on their toes.

Sundance

Park City, Utah

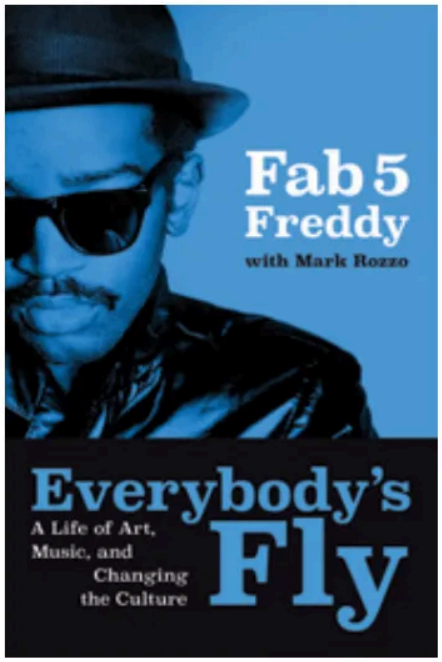
On the cold slopes of Park City's Main Street, one last hurrah took place this January. Sundance Film Festival, the indie film mecca birthed by Robert Redford, had it's final curtain. Sentiments were mixed. The programming was good, but reviews were fairly lackluster—as were sales. The Invite from Olivia Wilde starring herself, Seth Rogan, Penelope Cruz and Edward Norton was the festival's big bidding-war movie sale.

Overall, the local community had a hard time understanding why the festival was leaving for Boulder, Colorado next year. For myself, I am welcoming the relocation because Boulder is in my backyard. For those in Park City whose commercial success relies on that boon of people each year, I can sympathize. Others embrace this next chapter, excited to see the transition unfold.

For many attendees, it was simply an emotional experience. Decades of congregating in those mountain hills, creative communities built and flourished from within. More importantly, the founder and guiding star, Robert Redford, died months before at age 89. Having started it in 1981, he truly was the face of the institute. Seeing his daughter tearfully say she wished he was there beside her was a heartfelt moment.

The Vulture Studio was in action interviewing A-list talent, as was the Audible Variety Lounge. There were fewer celebrity sightings than in the past, but some of the bigger names included Charli XCX, Ethan Hawke, Olivia Wilde, and Peter Dinklage. There were major travel disruptions from storms in New York so that accounted for some no-shows, like Jessica Chastain and others. The nightlife was on point yet again opening weekend. Secret sets from Benson Boone and T.I. marked two of the signature events. In Park city, the films, panels, brunches, networking mixers and premier parties were flowing one last time.

by Jon Stone



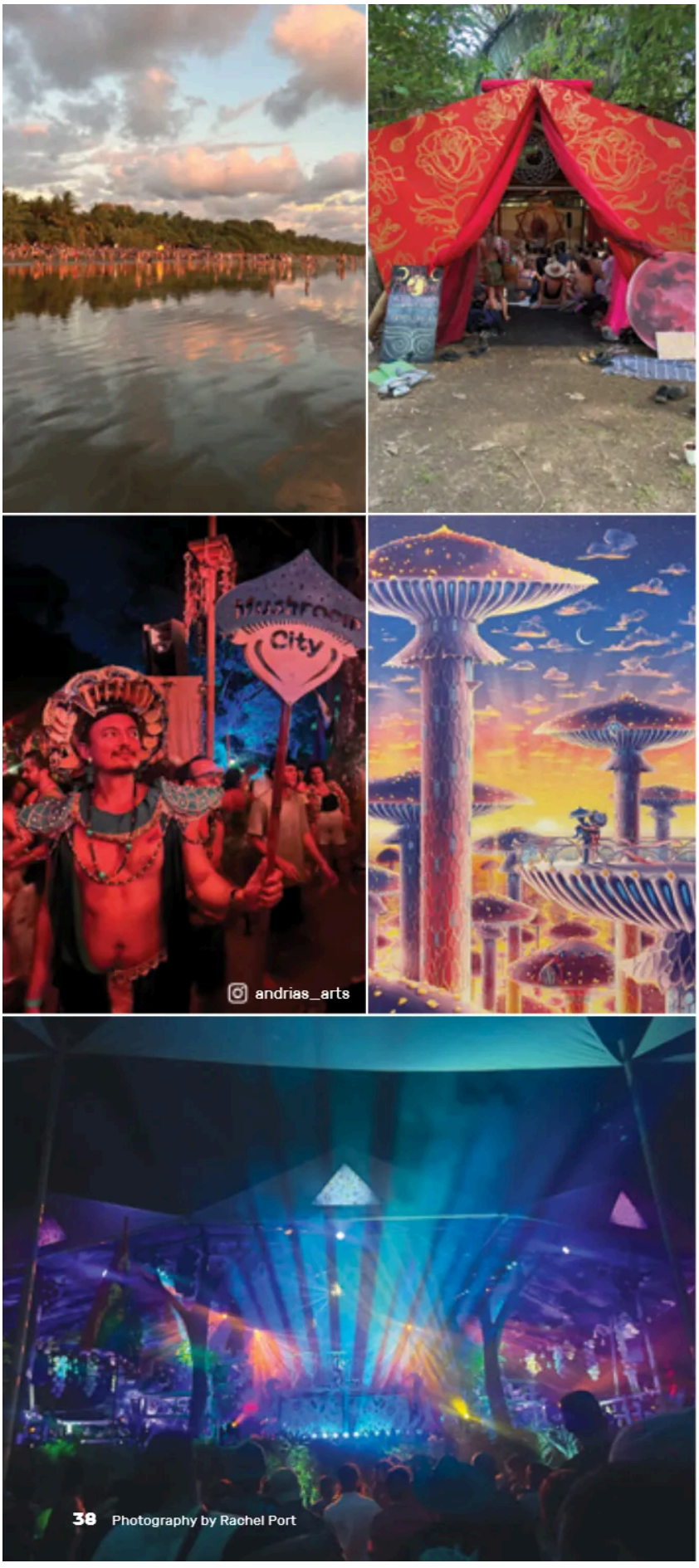
Everybody's Fly

Fab 5 Freddy with Mark Rozzo

Penguin Random House, 2026

The new memoir of New York City's multidisciplinary maven, Fab 5 Freddy, reads like a history of all things cool and revolutionary in the 20th Century. This is compulsory reading for any artist, DJ, or New Yorker. Growing up around his father's influential friends and the Bedstuy community, he had an intimate and transformative view of the height of jazz and civil rights movements. On each stop of the subway, we are schooled by Fab's story as he hops every racial and artistic turnstile on his pursuit to bridge the worlds between downtown new wave, hip-hop, and street art. With every page turn, we traverse an incredible coming of age tale of a black artist and mastermind destined to write his tag from the dancefloors of the underground to the auction houses of mainstream culture.

by Ranch Guerra



38 Photography by Rachel Port

Envision Festival

Uvita, Costa Rica

I spent four days in a jungle next to the beach, moving from talk to workshop to sunset to dancing all night to sunrise to six hours of sleep—and back again.

It's a mecca for bass-music lovers, which I am not, but since meeting a new lover who got me more comfortable with the world of contact dance, I finally understand it. There's something extremely primal about it, particularly during the last 30 minutes of Clozee's set. Holy wow. The sensual energy was tangible throughout the entire front section of the crowd, where the contact dancers lived for the whole festival.

The music was overall excellent. Traveller was the most surprising discovery for me—I had never heard of him before. He played some really cool, unexpected modern remixes of old electronic classics. Fabian Kroos sucked me into his first set so hard that I had to pull myself out of the trance that I was about to fall into. I've had my fair share of getting lost in the music.

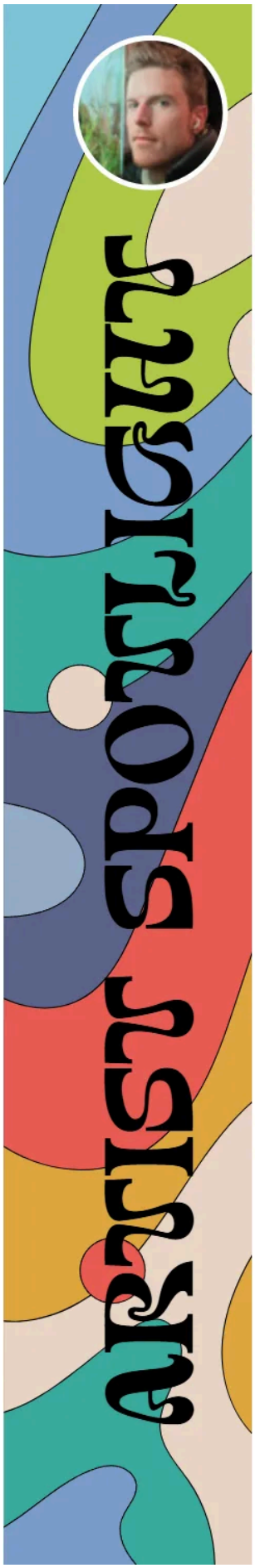
One clothing brand in particular caught my eye, Karuna. Their super-soft cotton fabrics and skimpy cuts made for the perfect jungle festival wear. I bought two sets. Highly recommend if you're ever in Costa Rica or need something small and breathable for summer weather.

I was heavily drawn to the art, as usual. I met a man in the crowd dressed as some kind of Arabic mushroom king and had to say hello. He had a 3D laser-cut staff that said Mushroom City. He told me to find him in the art gallery, so I went there and scoured every piece. I didn't know what I was looking for, but I knew when I found it.

And the festival people—oh, the festival people. You know the kind I'm talking about. The kind that makes you wonder if any of them have jobs in the real world. They do! They're just like us… but with a higher percentage of life coaches, wellness influencers, and ephemeral nomadic pixie dream girls. The girls were hot. There was a much higher percentage of attractive women than men for some reason.

Sunrise at the beach was a huge highlight for me. One morning, after jumping into the vast expanse of crystalline blue water, letting the waves roll over us, my companion and I sat in the muddy sand and made drip castles together. I felt like a kid again. Being connected to nature is something I deeply miss, living in New York City.

by Rachel Port

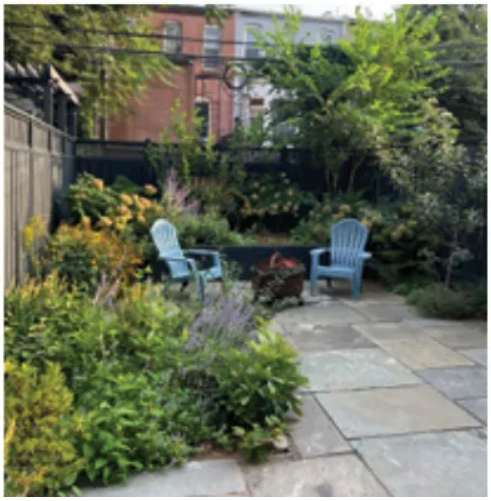


Benjamin Albrecht

Benjamin Albrecht is an artist, gardener, designer, and builder dedicated to transforming neglected spaces into thriving, ecological oases. With a passion for sustainability and a keen eye for design, he brings both creativity and expertise to every project.

Gardens and Landscapes

Gardens and landscapes can also be thought of as systems to which he applies a permacultural design framework. In designing garden spaces, he thinks about how to use space and energy as sustainably and self-sufficiently as possible in order to achieve set goals. When working in New York City, he is usually faced with small urban backyards. The objectives are to create a space for people to reconnect with and enjoy the beauty of nature, for children to play outdoors, to offer habitat for local beneficial insects and migratory birds, to mitigate runoff, grow food for people, and recycle the organic matter produced by the spaces. Urban landscaping in this way offers a solution to bringing our urban environments back into a more harmonious relationship with nature.



After earning degrees in Art and Neuroscience from Dartmouth College in 2016, Albrecht moved to New York to pursue a career in fine art. Along the way, his interests expanded to architecture, design, and ecology. He spent several years honing skills as a garden installer and landscaper, completing courses at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and a landscape architecture course through UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design. He eventually founded Mr. Nature Landscape Design and Build in 2022. Since then, he has completed projects in NYC, upstate, and California. He collaborates closely with clients, blending their vision with his knowledge and aesthetic sensibilities, to create functional, beautiful and harmonious garden spaces.

System Drawings

These drawings are explorations into and reflections of the complexity, interconnectedness and multifacetedness of the world we live in. This drawing practice is a way for him to take on ideas that may be overwhelming in scale and complexity, and resituate them in the context of play, absurdity and creative problem solving. As our technological systems advance and our ecological systems are under threat, how can these systems work together? Can they start to cross pollinate, and integrate into a symbiosis and mutualism? In this process, he allows streams of consciousness from these conceptual realms to flow into the drawing, assembling far flung associations into sometimes biomechanical and even cyborgesque systemic compositions. He is also very much inspired by Dr. Jon Todd who has been creating eco-machines to solve life's problems.

Aquatic Ecosystems

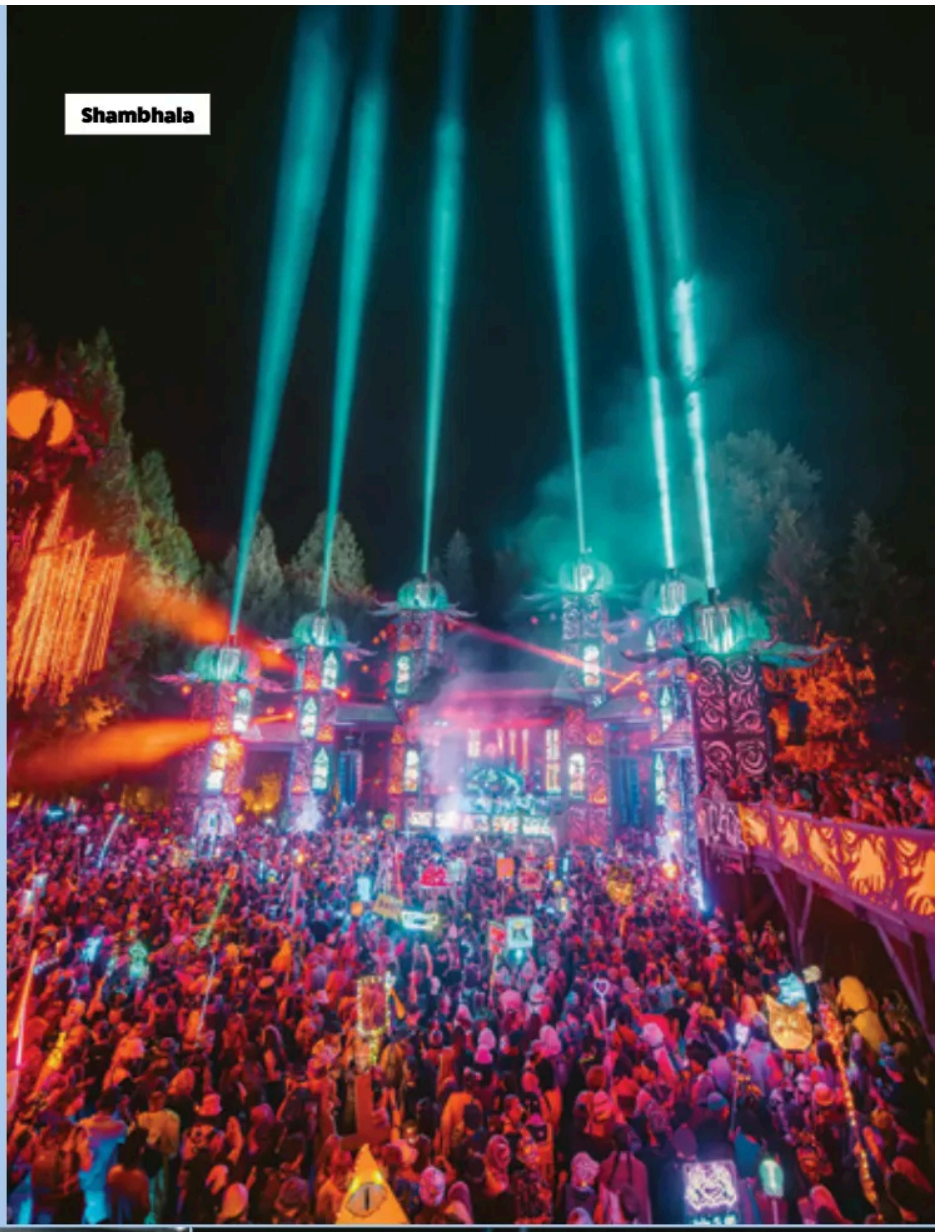
These lit living sculptural processes are an extension of the system drawings and a fusion of his artistic and gardening practices. They are also the beginnings of a sculptural practice where he aims to create somewhat whimsical aquatic and botanical system installations that are akin to the drawings. They are also a mixture of technological and biological elements including heating and lighting devices, glass, wood, stone, water, and living organisms. He hopes to create art, botanical installations and naturalistic eco aquariums for dispensaries all around the New York metropolitan area.

Contact Ben:
@mr.nature.landscaper
mrnaturelandscaper.com

NEAR AND FAR
FESTIVAL APPEAL

by Pasquale Zinna

Whether you're looking close to home in the greater New York area, a little further out across the vast expanse of the United States, or even further beyond to more distant corners of the globe, stepping into the enormity of music festivals can put even hawkish eyes out of balance. From metro to metro, coast to coast, we've selected a few choice events in 2026 to bring to your attention, showcasing the wide breadth of incredible music available for the discerning traveler.


Shambhala

Wire

Outlook

NEW YORK

Wire Festival

May 14-17

Putting a spotlight on local and international talents in house, techno, and global dance music, Wire Festival is celebrating its 5th anniversary as a contemporary celebration in NYC's rambunctious nightlife scene. Taking place at the locally- renowned Knockdown Center, the event promises to bring live acts and potent selectors together for several nights of the finest in steady beat musical flavors, including the sounds of MUTEK, Herrensauna, and FOLD.

Rochester Int'l Jazz Festival

June 19-27

Located in the heart of Rochester, New York, the Rochester International Jazz Festival is a beloved local institution with a global appeal. For the 23rd anniversary of the event, they'll be featuring an eye-watering 1750+ artists from across the planet throughout the 250 shows and 18 venues that make up the expansive takeover of downtown Rochester, with headlining sets from Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue, Galactic, The Kings of Latin Jazz, and many, many more.

BONUS:
Hudson River Music Festival
WHEN: June 21, 2026

NORTH AMERICA

Lightning in a Bottle

May 20-24

Making its home in the Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Center, Lightning in a Bottle has been a mecca of many manifestations since its initial inception in 2004. Returning in 2026 with renewed vigor, the festival once again puts on a multidisciplinary display across numerous genres and pockets of musical experiences. Empire of The Sun, Daily Bread, Overmono, and a trove of additional acts are set to provide a serious weekend of musical machinations in the California sun.

Shambhala Music Festival

July 24-27

Nestled within the expansive property of the Salmon River Ranch in BC, Canada, Shambhala stands as a legendary contributor to the electronic music circuit, bringing the talents of underground heroes and top-line acts together each year for an extended weekend get-down. This year, they're celebrating the 27th anniversary of the festival, bringing along Tycho, Hamdi, Interplanetary Criminal, and scores more to boot, highlighting the development of the Shambhala Music Festival "Farmily" as an institution of eclectic and electrifying sound.

BONUS:
New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival
WHEN: April 23-26 & April 30-May 3, 2026

GLOBAL

Outlook Origins

July 23-27

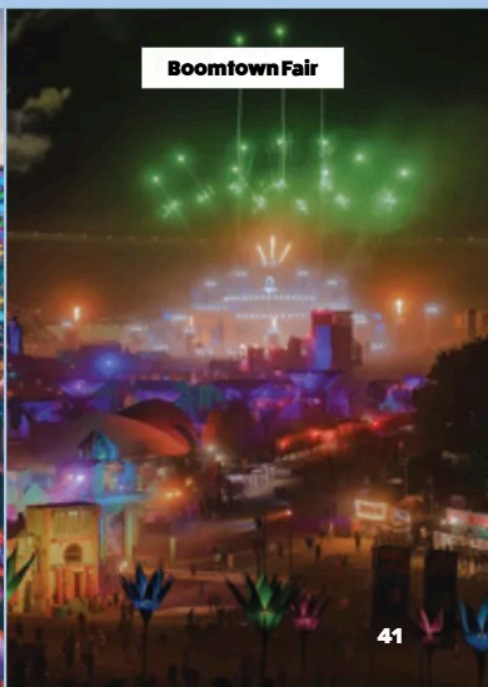
A distinctly global mecca for the sounds of the underground, Outlook channels the best and brightest in UK sound system culture and beyond through its powerful curation and dedication to pure, driven low-end sound. Located each year on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, they'll be hosting Outlook Origins at The Garden in Tisno, Croatia, bringing an assortment of greats like Alix Perez, Goldie, Commodo, and dozens of others from across the spectrum of sub-heavy acts.

Boomtown Fair

August 12-16

Year after year, the Boomtown crew descends upon the Matterly Estate in South Downs National Park in the UK, bringing along some of the best and brightest in both avant-garde and dance floor-centric producers, DJs, and creatives. Spread across eight "Districts" in an immersive, temporary cityscape, the fair itself is replete with workshops, activist camps, interactive art installations, and an evolving, onarrative that pulls revelers directly into the theatrics. They're set to return with a serious pack of talent, including Skrillex, Four Tet, Mungo's Hi-Fi, Shy FX, and plenty of others in tow.

BONUS:
Fuji Rock Music Festival
WHEN: July 24-26, 2026



MAY 4-5 NY CITY

BUDTENDERS IT'S YOUR NIGHT

An evening to celebrate the budtenders who power the cannabis community.

FARMS ✱ PRODUCERS ✱ PROCESSORS

CANNABIS SPEED NETWORKING

Join *Plug Hop* May 4–5 and meet 100 retail buyers and shop owners through curated, pre-scheduled 20 minute meetings.
A conference built for real connections and real decisions – ending with a stylish after-hours celebration honoring budtenders.

Ask your favorite brands or farms for an exclusive invite to the *Plug Hop* After Hours Party. ***DRESS TO IMPRESS!***

PLUG HOP

Register today at PlugHop.org

COOKING WITH CANNABIS

Lemon Rose Cupcakes

by Rhiana Hernandez Pastry Chef & Cannabis Educator

Rhiana is a Brooklyn-based pastry chef and American Culinary Federation-certified culinary cannabis educator. They specialize in infused desserts with eclectic flavor pairings and ensuring cannabis education is accessible to everyone. When not thinking about cake and cookie recipes, they perform with the punk band Baby Got Back Talk. They are an avid King of the Hill enthusiast.

k.o.k.u.j.i.n.

Servings: 12 | Prep: 20 min | Cook: 20 min
Infused base: magical butter

Springtime brings about more than just warmer weather and blooming flowers for me. The onset of spring opens up a world of beautiful seasonal flavors and beautiful florals that hide away during the colder months. After a whole season of cinnamon and nutmeg and pumpkin spice, I'm always ready to jump back into adding flowers into everything I make! These lemon rose cupcakes are a wonderful balance between citrus and rose, and (to me) encapsulates the blooming newness of the season. Be careful and work slowly with the rosewater and taste between additions to ensure it doesn't taste like perfume!

INGREDIENTS:

CUPCAKES:

1 and 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 and 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp salt
2 large eggs (veg sub: flaxseed eggs)
2/3 cup granulated sugar
zest from 2 lemons
3/4 cup (170g) magical butter (veg sub: vegan magical butter)
2 tsp honey
1/2 cup milk (veg sub: non-dairy milk)

FROSTING:

1 cup (226g) unsalted butter, room temp
3 and 1/2 cups powdered sugar
2-3 tbsp rosewater
1/2 tsp salt
2 tsp honey
3 tbsp heavy cream

CANNABIS INFUSION:

See how to make magical infused butter online.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (177°C). Line a muffin pan with cupcake liners. Set aside.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt together in a medium bowl. In a second bowl, beat the eggs and sugar until light and foamy, about 2 minutes. While beating, slowly pour in the butter and then the honey. While mixing, add half the dry ingredients, then add all the milk, and follow with the rest of the dry ingredients.
3. Divide the batter evenly in the prepared cupcake liners. Bake for about 20-25 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Allow cupcakes to cool completely before frosting.
4. Sift 3 cups of powdered sugar into a medium bowl. Set aside.
5. Cream butter for a few minutes in a stand mixer with the paddle attachment. On low speed, slowly pour in the dry ingredients.
6. Mix until sugar is absorbed by the butter. Increase to medium speed and add the honey, rosewater, and salt. Slowly add in heavy cream and beat until the frosting reaches a desired texture. Add the last 1/2 cup of confectioners' sugar if needed to increase frosting thickness.
7. Pipe or spread the frosting onto the cooled cupcakes. Decorate with sprinkles, if desired.

Photography by offishu_

LAST PRISONER PROJECT

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM OF ALL CANNABIS PRISONERS

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1

TAKE ACTION

2

WRITE A LETTER

3

DONATE

WE HELP REUNITE FAMILIES, REBUILD LIVES, AND REPAIR THE HARMS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS.

44

FOLLOW US @LASTPRISONERPROJECT

Cannabis! Takes the Stage Again

by Peter Shafran

Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville Returns with Live Music and Film Screening

Both shows at Joe's Pub last summer sold out. If you caught those performances, you know why. *Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville* didn't feel like theater about weed—it felt like someone finally told our story right. Seventy-five minutes that moved through jazz clubs and Beat poetry and AIDS activism, Louis Armstrong and his "gage," the Mexican Revolution's role in prohibition, Dylan and The Beatles opening doors, the justice fights happening right now. It all connects, it all mattered, and it shaped where we are now. The show kept you locked in the whole time. Now it's back.

We got involved with this project last year and haven't stopped talking about it since. When the team organized their investor showcase last November, we signed on as media sponsor without hesitation. Why? Because watching Baba Israel, Grace Galu Kalambay, and Nic Benacerraf pitch this show to actual cannabis industry people who understand what it represents—that's the whole point of what we do here. Building bridges and supporting work that matters.

April 27: Songs from *Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville*

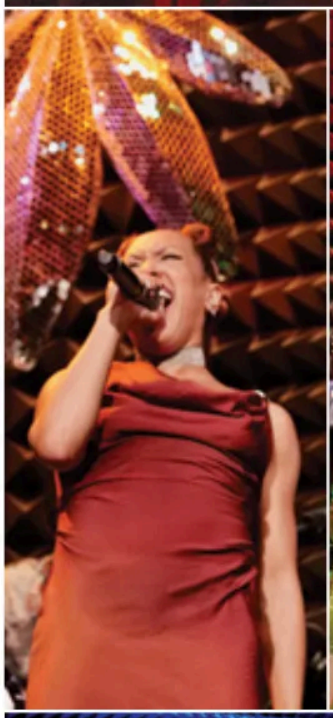
Nublu, 151 Loisaida Ave. 7:00–10:00 p.m.

Grace Galu, Duv, and the band perform songs from the show. No full theatrical production, no elaborate staging—just the music that carries this century-long story, pared down and performed live. But paring it down doesn't diminish it. The music holds up on its own. This is part of Lift Up, Baba Israel's monthly hip-hop night, so you're getting the full downtown experience: DJ Rickman, The Lift Up All Stars, hip-hop group Get Open bringing that authentic energy, and threaded through all of it, the sounds of *Cannabis!*—Louis Armstrong's jazz morphing into Beatnik rhythms morphing into funk morphing into hip-hop. Because that's the actual trajectory. Cannabis culture didn't stay in one lane, and neither does this music.

May 4: Screening: *Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville*

Cinema Village. 22 East 12th Street. Sunday, May 4. 7:00 p.m.

Want the complete experience? The immersive design, the full narrative arc, all the theatrical elements that earned reviews in *The New York Times* and *Forbes* in July 2022? They shot the 2022 La MaMa E.T.C. run with multiple cameras, professional setup, cinema-quality sound and picture. And the screening isn't just a film: Grace Galu, Baba Israel, and Duv perform live before the screening, and the night closes with a Q&A with the full team including Nic Benacerraf. Cinema Village has championed independent voices and boundary-pushing work for decades. You're getting the full run that made the rounds.

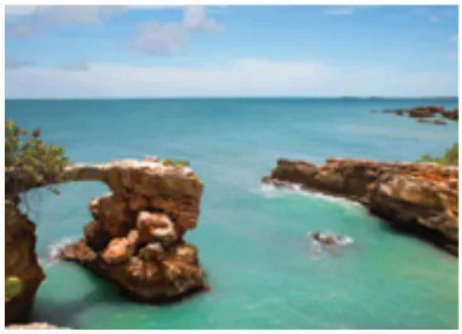


BEYOND SAN JUAN
THREE SPOTS TO EXPERIENCE
PUERTO RICO

by Amy Gordon

Vieques' Free-roaming Horses

Ponce's First Fire Department



Cabo Rojo's Dazzling Rock Formations

If Bad Bunny has taught us anything, it's that Puerto Rico is so much more than just the cobblestone streets of Old San Juan and miles of endless beaches. This diverse, sun-soaked corner of the world is home to natural wonders, historical treasures, and beautiful people. I've called PR home for a decade, and while these three incredible spots might not be at the top of your "to visit" list, they're well worth the extra effort.

Puerto Rico's medical marijuana program offers full reciprocity, meaning if you are a licensed medical cannabis patient in any state, you can purchase it here. If you don't have a license, you can easily apply for a temporary medical cannabis card after a quick evaluation by an approved professional.

Vieques: Unspoilt Caribbean

Roughly seven miles to the east of Puerto Rico's main island, Vieques is the Caribbean you didn't know still existed. Free-roaming horses are the only reason for traffic backups, water glows in the dark, and you don't have to go far to have a white-sand beach all to yourself. When it's time to get out of the sun, explore Vieques' fascinating history by visiting an 18th-century Spanish military fort, the jungly ruins of a once-thriving sugar industry, and miles of abandoned U.S. Navy bunkers.

Stay: El Blok, Finca Victoria

Ponce: Where History Was Made

Ponce overlooks the sparkling Caribbean Sea, but even more compelling than the scenery is the history that happened here. Stroll through town, and you'll find monuments and parks that pay homage to the city's great significance in the Puerto Rican Nationalist movement, as well as a museum dedicated to the municipality's heritage as the island's first fire department, an architecturally astonishing church, and more.

Stay: Ponce Plaza Hotel & Casino, Meliá Century Hotel

Cabo Rojo: Salt Flats and Sunsets

Nature puts on quite a show in Cabo Rojo, where pink salt flats, orange sunsets, crystal-clear water, and dazzling rock formations captivate at every turn. At night in the seaside strip of Boqueron, locals and visitors dance together to salsa and bachata, slurp fresh oyster shooters with hot sauce, and play dominoes into the early-morning hours.

Stay: Combate Beach Resort, Boho Beach Club

Cannabis & Travel

Legal in 40 States for Medicine, 24 for Recreation

New York: Ranked among top cities that legalized within the last five years

MARKET SIZE

$12.2 BILLION — Global cannabis tourism market value (2024)

$25.7 BILLION — Projected market value by 2030

13.2% — Compound Annual Growth Rate 2024-2030

50% — U.S. share of global cannabis tourism revenue (2023)

WHO'S TRAVELING

Ages **25-44** — 44% of market (largest segment)

Ages **18-24** — growing fastest (12.2% CAGR projected through 2030)

Ages **45+** — remaining share of market

62% of cannabis consumers (21+, household income $50K+) are interested in cannabis-centric travel experiences

50% of Millennials say legal cannabis access influences their vacation destination choice

TOP U.S. CITIES FOR CANNABIS TRAVEL

#1 DENVER, Colorado
- 48 dispensaries per 100K residents
- 20 guided cannabis tours (most of any U.S. city)
- 420-friendly lodging up 32% since 2022
- Average oz. price: $241 (24% below national avg.)

#2 PORTLAND, Oregon
- 55 dispensaries per 100K residents
- Avg. 420-friendly lodging: $161/night (33% below national avg)
- Consumption lounges (e.g., Flight Lounge)

#3 BOULDER, Colorado
- 70 dispensaries per 100K residents (highest density of any ranked city)
- 67 420-friendly lodgings per 100K residents

#4 MISSOULA, Montana
- 68 dispensaries per 100K residents (2nd highest)
- Avg. 420-friendly lodging: $180/night

#5 BURLINGTON, Vermont
- 103 weed-friendly accommodations per 100K (highest of any ranked city)
- 52 dispensaries per 100K residents

GLOBAL HOTSPOTS

Amsterdam, Netherlands — 58% of international tourists visit specifically to consume cannabis

Canada — Legal since 2018 Cannabis yoga (B.C.), culinary tours (Toronto), national park consumption Int'l cannabis tourism up 30% in 2024

Uruguay — First country to fully legalize (recreational + medical)

Spain — Private social club model (members co-own production; no retail purchase)

Jamaica — Long-standing cannabis culture; consumption widely tolerated

South Africa — Legalized personal use 2024; emerging tourism infrastructure

Germany — Legalized 2024; commercial access still developing

AVOID

Thailand — Major cannabis tourism destination 2022–mid 2025 | June 26, 2025: recreational cannabis recriminalized | Medical-only: requires Thai-issued prescription | Recreational possession: up to 1 year prison + 20,000 baht fine

Research & Markets, 2025, Global Strategic Business Report, July 2025. MMGY Travel Intelligence, Harris Poll, Upgraded Points Cannabis Vacation Study, March 2025

SANTA Fe

From Ancient Cave Dwellings to Massages That Will Send You into the Vortex, Why Santa Fe is a Go-To for Luxury Lovers and Outdoor Enthusiasts

by Margaux Lushing

One of my great domestic travel pleasures is landing at a small, Southwest airport, knowing bouquets of dried chiles and Native-inspired patterns will be leading the way to a weekend of natural beauty at a slowed pace. On a recent weekend escape to Santa Fe, a wide-open desert drive ended at Four Seasons Rancho Encantado, the most intimate Four Seasons in the country, made of just 65 adobe casitas tucked into the Sangre de Cristo foothills, close enough to hike ancient cliff dwellings by day and wander the city's gallery-filled streets by late afternoon.

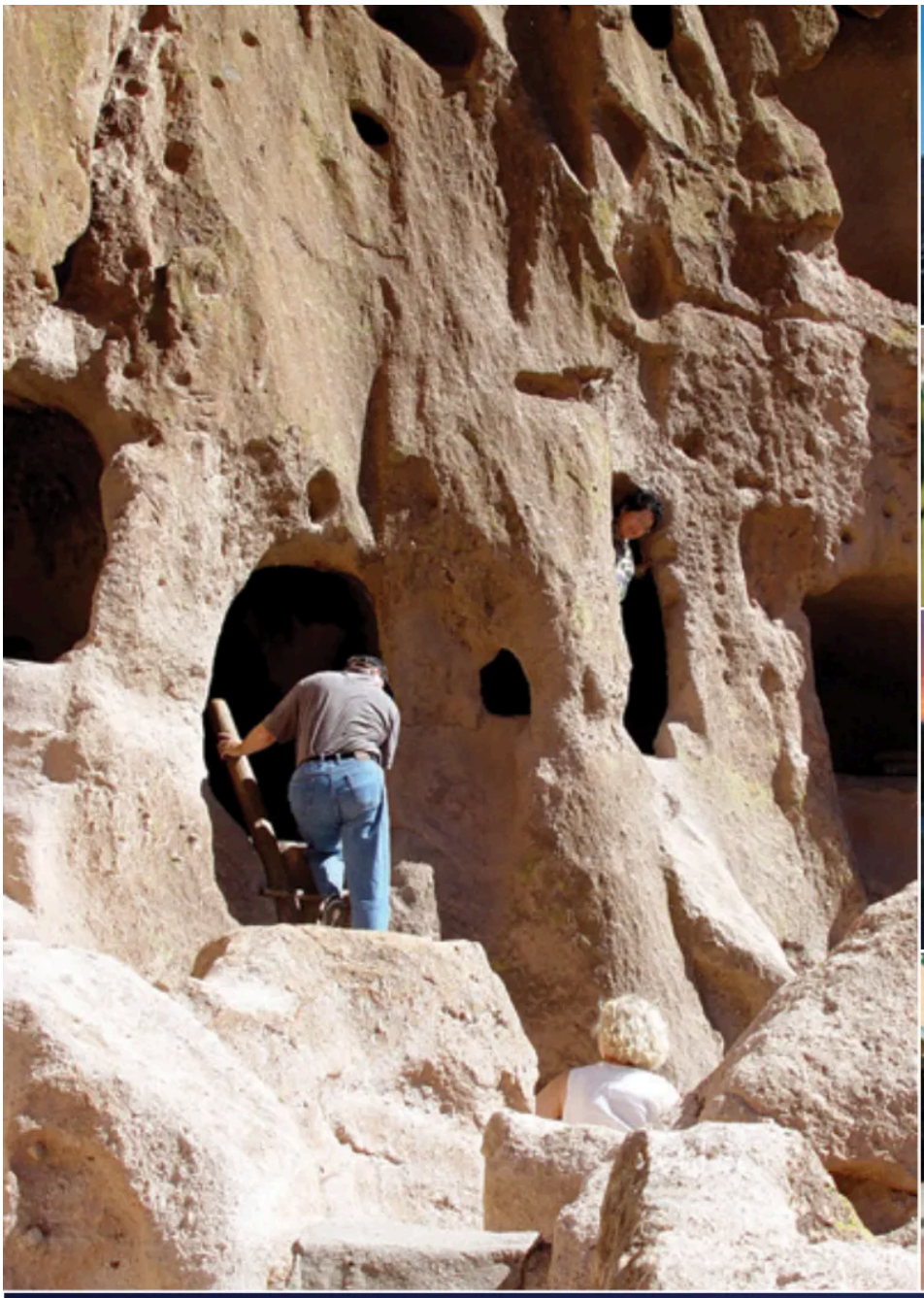
Upon checking into the Four Seasons Rancho Encantado, a golf cart whisked me to my quiet casita, outfitted with not one, but two fireplaces: one inside the guest room and one outside on a private patio with more than enough room for a luxe breakfast spread al fresco the following morning. A poolside lunch was a natural transition from travel hustle to resort-chill, followed by cocktails and dinner at Terra. After-dinner s'mores by the firepit are a perfect excuse to stare upward in awe at a canopy of stars above. For anyone not familiar with building the perfect fire back at the casita, a fireplace butler service can ensure perfect flames.

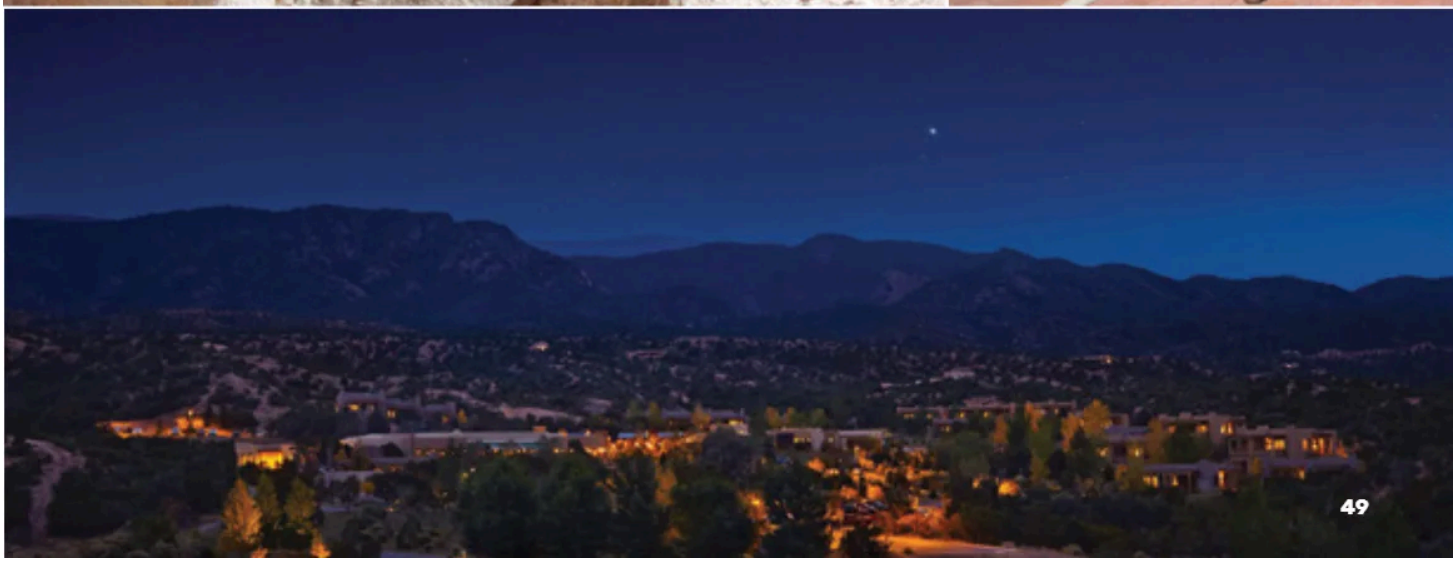
The next morning, one of Four Seasons' own local guides pulls up in an SUV stocked with snacks and lunch for a journey to Bandelier National Monument, as part of an "Ancient to Present" half-day tour. As someone who typically resists long drives on a weekend escape, I found the hour-long drive through ancient Pueblo lands essential to appreciating the scale and gravity of the region, as it relates to ancient history and the 20th century Manhattan Project which was headquartered nearby.

We arrived early to avoid crowds. A flat hike led us along a creek and a preserved 14th century Pueblo village with kivas before depositing us at the base of Bandelier's main attraction: tall, prehistoric cave dwellings. We climbed ladders into prehistoric cave structures and examined ancient petroglyphs up-close. Our guide explained the many ways the Pueblo people used this area from prehistoric times until the 16th century.

Upon return, it was time to meet the resort's bees in a complimentary experience the property calls its Fly By. The property's beekeeper shared an overview of hive production onsite, though for those interested in a deeper dive, a Hive Dive experience is an immersive, two-hour adventure complete with bee suits. Steps away, the property's 10,000 square spa awaited. During an Earth and Sky massage, a grounding foot scrub, warm oil scalp treatment and traditional deep tissue massage relaxed me enough to think I was now one with the Santa Fe energy vortex.

Once thoroughly relaxed, I hopped on the hotel shuttle for the 10 minute ride into town for some gallery-hopping and a healthy bite at *Henry & the Fish*. The Georgia O'Keefe Museum is a highlight, its intimate scale feeling almost like a private home. A three-minute walk to design-forward dispensary *Verdes* led me to helpful budtenders and an ample selection. After a leisurely dispensary outing, a visit to *Chaine* on Burro Alley was in order. This charming macaron shop features flavors ranging from lemon lavender to chimayó red chile. After, it was time to take the shuttle back to the property for one last desert sunset.




49

PACK LIGHT FLY HIGH

Travel Gift Guide for the Elevated Explorer

by Ranch Guerra

1 Wana
Stay Asleep / Fast Asleep Gummies

While on your next trip, be prepared for a cross-country red-eye or a noisy hotel room. Wana's new Stay Asleep and Fast Asleep gummies feature cannabinoid-terpene blends and science-backed sleep formulations to support restorative, non-drowsy sleep. Stay Asleep's long-lasting formula includes 5mg of THC, CBN, CBG & 20mg of CBD. Fast Asleep's fast-acting formula utilizes Azuca's Time Infusion technology (5-15 onset) and includes 2mg of THC, CBN, CBG; 10mg of CBD; and 1mg of melatonin. All organic sweetener, no artificial flavors, away from home sleep savers.

2 MFNY
All Night Affair

MFNY's cannabis science lab is always hard at work. The brand's newest crowd pleaser is the All Night Affair THC-infused all-natural intimacy oil. The combination of Candy Rain live resin, jojoba oil, vanilla, roman chamomile, and ylang-ylang essential oil is guaranteed to elevate the mood, release tension, and inspire freaky things behind closed doors. Essential for a romantic getaway or to have on hand, ready to impress an unexpected connection while adventuring.

3 Cotopaxi
Cubo Expandable Packing Cube Set

2026 is the year that you leave behind the messy luggage life. Cotopaxi's Cubo Expandable Packing Cube Set is all you need to keep your essentials in order. Two packing cubes feature expandable zippers that help optimize luggage space. They are made from lightweight 100% recycled mesh, and the top grab handle is a nice touch.

4 Manta
SOUND Mask

Flights, trains, buses, and group road trips. Heading back to a hotel room after an all-night rave or a never-ending wedding afterparty. Sleeping while travelling sometimes means blocking out the world and telling our circadian rhythm to screw off, even with the sun shining. Manta's SOUND Sleep Mask gives you complete control over the two senses that have the biggest impact on your sleep: sight and sound. Ultra-thin Bluetooth® headphones are nestled within a ventilated strap, with a 24-hour battery life. C-shaped eye cups provide a blackout seal and ensure zero eye pressure for side-sleep comfort.

5 Smyle Labs
Inhaler 510 Vape Battery

While travelling, some folks boldly display their cannabis products for all to see. We commend you, brave ones, but for the rest, Smyle Lab's Inhaler 510 Vape Battery is an ingenious way to get your puff on. Two cover sizes mean any size 510 cart will do. The built-in personal filter allows you to hide your clouds and keep up that James Bond low profile. Sure to leave TSA and nightclub bouncers clueless.

6 Happy Hounds
Calm + Joint Soft Chews

Traveling with your dog or cat just got easier. Happy Hounds Calm + Joint Soft Chews combine a full-spectrum CBD to ease travel stress while supporting mobility. The tasty soft chews, made with beef and bacon, keep dogs and cats comfortable and ready for wherever the journey leads.

7 Insta 360
X5

You've seen the Instagram Reels; 360 videos of your friend snowboarding, scuba diving, or exploring Times Square in the middle of a blizzard that leave you wondering who their personal videographer is. That movie magic is courtesy of the Insta360 X5 action camera's two wide-angle fisheye lenses, and its invisible selfie-stick effect. Advanced AI noise reduction and dynamic range optimization deliver clear, vivid footage even in low-light situations. There is a bit of a learning curve when it comes to using and editing, but documenting one's journeys just got way cooler.

1

fast asleep
wana
stay asleep

3

5

2

Affair

7

4

CALM + JOINT
CBD SOFT-CHEWS FOR DOGS AND CATS
happy hounds

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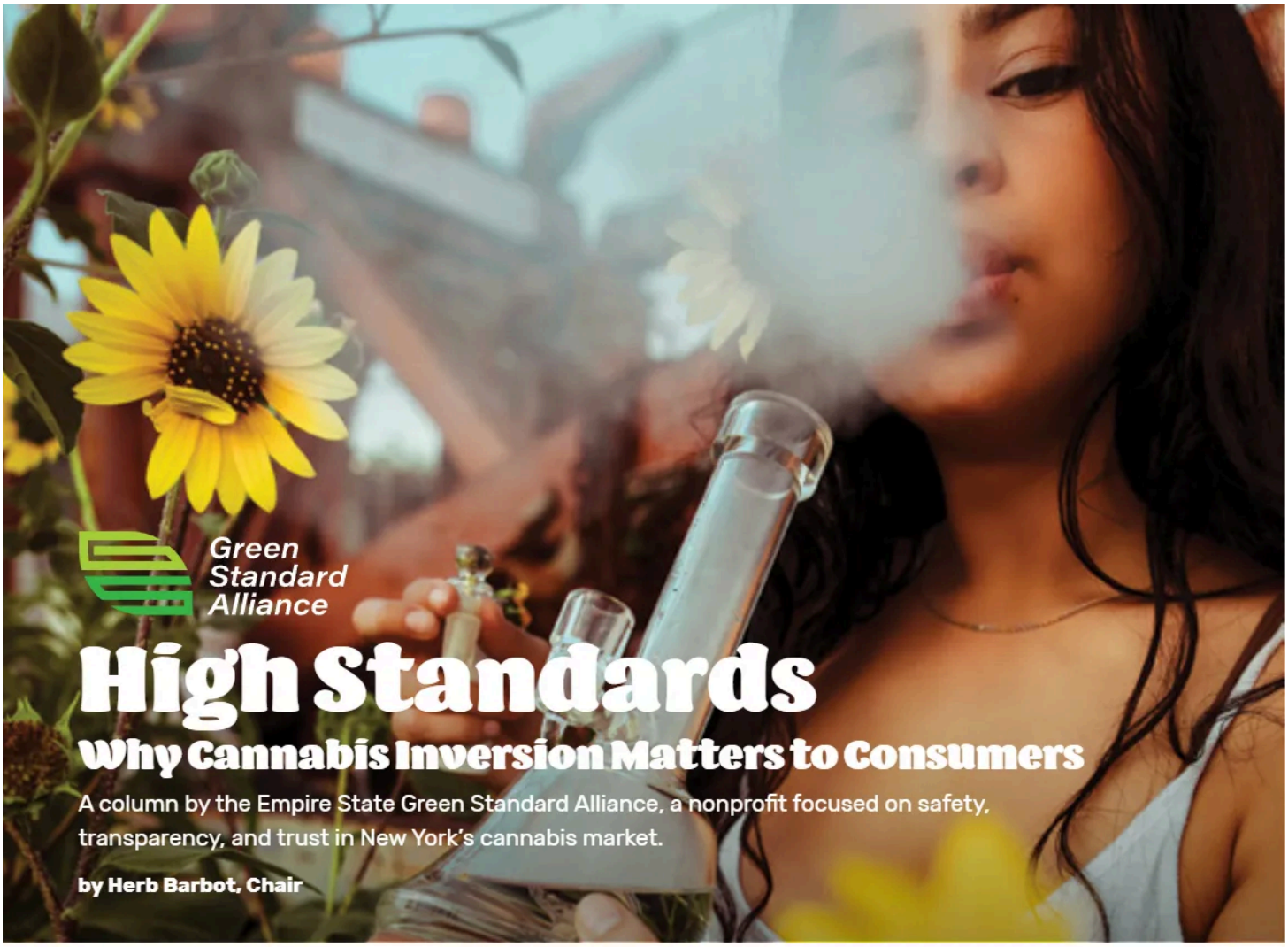

Green Standard Alliance

High Standards

Why Cannabis Inversion Matters to Consumers

A column by the Empire State Green Standard Alliance, a nonprofit focused on safety, transparency, and trust in New York's cannabis market.

by Herb Barbot, Chair

When New York legalized cannabis, consumers were promised something simple: safer products and a system they could trust. If you buy cannabis from a licensed dispensary, you expect it to be tested, honestly labeled, and produced under clear rules. Cannabis inversion threatens that promise.

In a white paper published by the Empire State Green Standard Alliance, *Cannabis Inversion: The Threat to Consumer Safety and Market Integrity*, inversion is defined as what happens when illegal cannabis is slipped into the legal market and sold as if it were compliant. The paperwork may look legitimate, but the product's true origin and safety may be anything but.

This is not a theoretical concern. New York regulators have already issued recalls tied to products that raised serious questions about sourcing and testing. In one high-profile case, the state expanded a recall after discovering cannabis material had come from an unlicensed out-of-state source. In another, a New York testing lab was pushed out of the market after regulators found unreliable results and questionable certificates of analysis. These incidents made headlines for a reason: they exposed cracks in a system consumers rely on.

For consumers, the risks are straightforward. Inverted products may skip proper manufacturing standards or meaningful third-party testing. That raises the chances of mold, pesticides, heavy metals, or leftover solvents making their way into products. Labels can also be wrong, especially when it comes to THC levels. For medical patients, older adults, or new consumers, inaccurate labels can turn a routine purchase into an uncomfortable or unsafe experience.

Inversion also damages trust. Every recall or lab scandal makes people wonder whether the legal market is really safer than the illicit one. When that confidence fades, consumers pull back, compliant businesses suffer, and the very goals of legalization start to unravel.

At its core, this is a consumer issue. Legal cannabis only works if people can trust what they are buying. Transparency, honest testing, and real accountability are not extras. They are the foundation of consumer protection in a regulated market.

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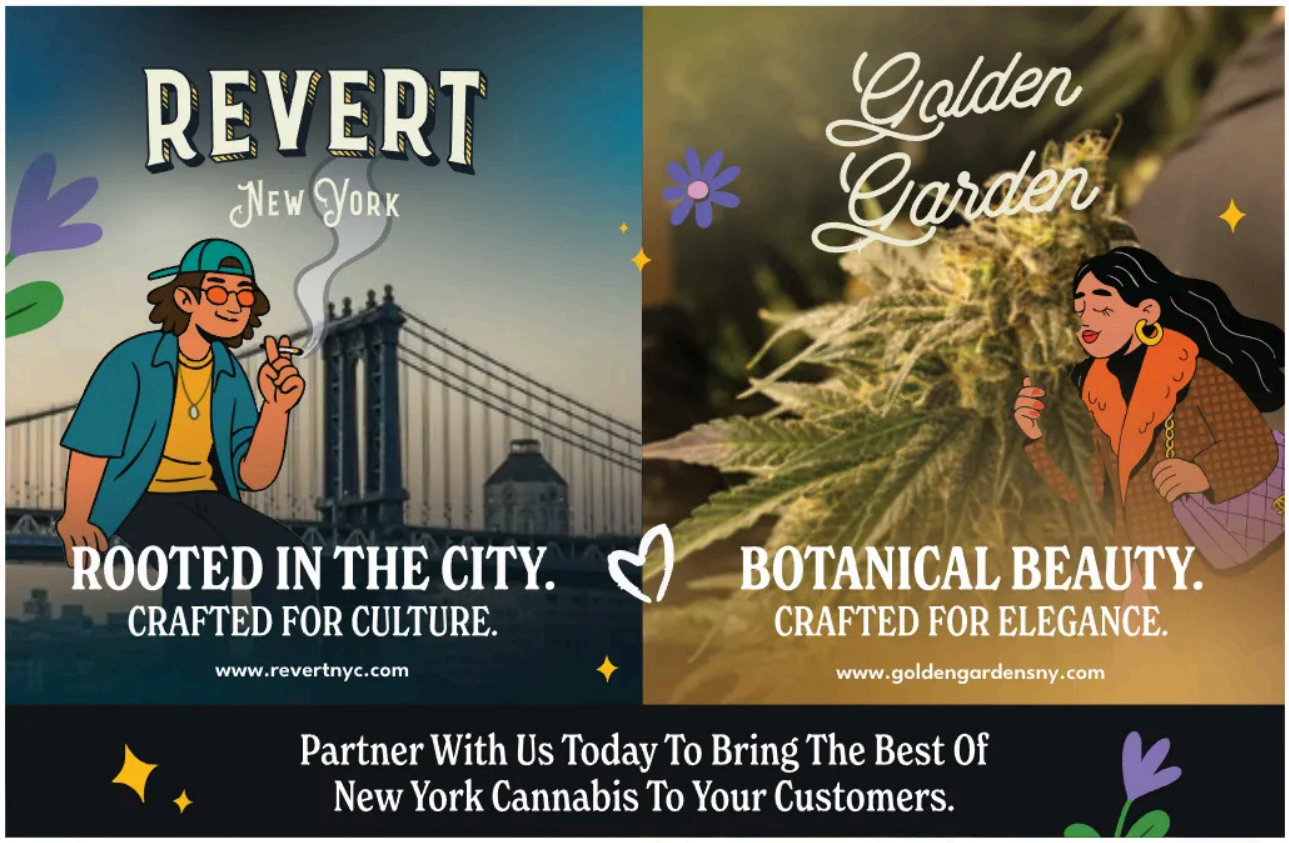
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PSYCHEDELICS AND CANNABIS
CATALYSTS OF JOURNEYS WITHIN

by Dr. Manesh Girn

When we think of traveling, we usually think of getting on the road or hopping on a plane. We imagine traversing physical distances to get to distant lands. But for centuries, humans have used plants and fungi to embark on voyages of an altogether different kind: inward journeys into the vast and uncharted territories of the mind. Today, exciting advances in neuroscience and psychedelic research are beginning to map these inner landscapes to an unprecedented degree.

The Neuroscience of Inner Travel

At the center of this story is a constellation of brain regions known as the default mode network, or DMN. This network is active when we daydream, reflect on ourselves, and spin our personal narrative of who we are, who we've been, and who we're becoming. Under the influence of classic psychedelics like psilocybin and LSD, the DMN—alongside other brain networks—undergoes a profound disruption. Rigid patterns of coordinated activity dissolve and the brain's networks begin to communicate in new ways. The result is a radical departure from ordinary waking consciousness: our sense of self may dissolve, familiar objects become imbued with new significance, and we might feel a sense of interconnectedness with all things. Even though we may not have moved an inch, we feel like we've gone on a trip—and, indeed, we have.

Cannabis is similar but different. Rather than broadly destabilizing our brain networks, it influences attention and perception more selectively. It might amplify the salience of our sensory experiences—making them "hit harder"—and open our mind to a more associative, non-linear style of thinking. Although less intense than psychedelics, cannabis can also allow us to journey away from the familiar grooves of our psyche.

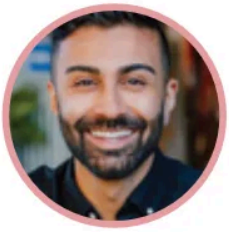
Flexible Self-Awareness

Something common to both experiences is their capacity to shake us out of autopilot. The brain naturally defaults to habitual patterns for the sake of energetic efficiency—but not all habits serve us. Psychedelics and cannabis can each act as "pattern interrupts," loosening the grip of our typical interpretations, emotional reactions, and stories. Researchers describe this as psychological flexibility: the capacity to relate to our thoughts more lightly, observing them rather than becoming enmeshed in them. In that more flexible state, rigid thought patterns might become more open to change.

Rewriting the Inner Critic

One powerful application of this flexibility is that it can help us free ourselves from the tyranny of the inner critic: that internal voice of self-blame and judgment that can be a dominant voice within our psyches. By disrupting the neuronal pathways that sustain it, the intentional use of psychedelics—and potentially cannabis—can loosen the critic's grip and open an opportunity to write a different story.

The journey inward may be the most consequential one we embark on. We can travel all we want in the external world, but our most intimate and constant companion is our own mind. Perhaps the most transformative act of exploration isn't crossing an ocean or visiting a distant culture, but it's finally turning to face the landscape within.



THE PSYCHEDELIC SCIENTIST

Dr. Manesh Girn is a neuroscientist and psychedelic researcher who is dedicated to advancing our understanding of the effects of psychedelics on our minds and brains, and how cutting-edge neuroscientific research can inform approaches to healing, growth, and personal transformation.

The Psychedelic Artist

Blake Foster is a visionary painter whose work is devoted to bridging expanded states of consciousness with the rhythms of everyday life. Through his art, he creates "snapshots" of his inner landscape, honoring the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of his altered experiences. By sharing these sacred inner journeys outwardly, he seeks to dissolve stigma surrounding these allies and to support pathways of personal awakening and collective transformation.

PSYCHEDELIC ART THERAPY

AT THE ART OF INTEGRATION

by Juanita Viera

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, I was working in Brooklyn as a creative arts therapist, supporting trauma survivors through one of the most destabilizing mental health crises of our time. That was when I first learned about *Ketamine-Assisted Psychotherapy*. KAP was gaining legal approval as a fast-acting treatment for cases of chronic depression, anxiety and PTSD. During my academic studies, I read about the pioneering psychedelic therapy research of the 1950s and was intrigued, yet discouraged. This research was defunded during the War on Drugs, so I assumed psychedelic therapy would remain underground and inaccessible in the clinical therapy space.

Inspired by ketamine's new FDA-approved status, I trained in KAP and have since facilitated over 200 journeys. I blend art, music, and psychedelic medicine into therapy that feels both ancient and innovative. Psychedelics open the subconscious, and art-making helps map and integrate what emerges.

To prepare for sessions, clients engage in scribble drawing exercises, finding images within spontaneous marks, or bilateral scribbling to regulate the nervous system. This playful, imperfect process mirrors the ketamine journey: we don't control what emerges, but we stay curious. For high-achieving trauma survivors, the freedom of "no wrong way" can be deeply healing and freeing.

During medicine sessions, clients paint intention rocks for a shared altar. Words like "Breathe," "Trust," "Flow," "Clarity," or symbols like spirals and waves become anchors and reminders for the journey. Revisiting childhood memories of art-making often softens defenses and rekindles creativity, an essential ingredient in trauma healing and burnout recovery.

Integration is where art therapy truly shines. After journeys, clients are scheduled for a video integration call and are guided to create a digital collage inspired by their experience. We use a platform that is based on sand tray therapy principles developed by Dr. Karen Fried. Clients select clip art images to translate abstract psychedelic imagery into a visual narrative. We explore the themes together and connect them to real-world shifts: boundaries, self-compassion, and daily lifestyle adjustments. Many clients access renewed strength and joy after struggling for years with feeling stuck in loops and self- sabotage, so the integration work is important for sustaining meaningful change.

In group work, during our final sessions, we build ephemeral eco-art group collages from branches, leaves, flowers, and mixed media art supplies. The collaborative creation becomes a living 3D metaphor for group cohesion and belonging. For many clients with complex PTSD, being witnessed and supported while creating is profoundly reparative. During the neuroplastic window, clients are encouraged to visit urban parks to collect natural items for eco-art fostering sustained well-being and deepening their connection with nature.

The synergy between the arts and psychedelics is not new, both have been used for centuries in communal ceremonial healing. What feels exciting now is that neuroscience is beginning to confirm what artists and seekers have long known: altered states increase creativity and neuroplasticity. When paired with art psychotherapy, that neuroplastic reset and fresh perspective can help clients shift long-held survival patterns in the mind-body into new ways of being. For me, the beauty and magic is in the moment a client says, "I didn't know I could see myself or life this way." The Art of Integration clients are encouraged to display their artwork in their homes, or as wallpaper on their phones or computers, as a reminder to integrate the breakthroughs from the psychedelic art therapy sessions into their approach to daily life.

Learn more about services and programs at The Art of Integration:
integrationartstherapy.com
art.of.integration

420 101

by Steve Bloom

No one at *High Times* had ever heard of 420 until yours truly brought back a flyer to the New York office after attending a Grateful Dead show on Dec. 28, 1990, at the Oakland Coliseum.

While walking around the parking lot with some friends, we ran into a Deadhead handing out a flyer printed on an 8 x 11 sheet of green paper. The flyer was typewritten with handwritten scrawls in the margin that read:

420 started somewhere in San Rafael, CA in the late '70s. It started as the police code for Marijuana Smoking in Progress. After local heads heard of the police call, they started using the expression 420 when referring to herb—'Let's Go 420, dude!' After a while something magical started to happen. People began getting stoned at 4:20 am and/or pm. There's something fantastic about getting ripped at 4:20, when you know your brothers and sisters all over the country and even the planet are lighting up and tokin' up right along with you.

Now there's something even grander than getting baked at 4:20. We're talking about the day of celebration, the real time to get high, the grand master of all holidays: 4/20, or April 20th. This is when you must get the day off work or school. We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for 420-ing in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge sunset spot on Mt. Tamalpais. Just go to downtown Mill Valley, find a stoner and ask where Bolinas Ridge is. If you make it to Marin, you will definitely find it.

HELPFUL HINTS: Take extra care that nothing is going to go wrong within that minute. No heavy winds, no cops, no messed-up lighters. Get together with your friends and smoke pot hardcore.

The handwritten statements included "Smoke Pot at 4:20," "Legalize It!" and "George Is the Only Illegal Bush."

We published the flyer's text in the May 1991 issue when I was still news editor at *High Times*. The magazine adopted 420 principles, which mostly involved having sessions at and around 4:20. We would leave the office on 4/20 to have smoke-outs in a nearby park. Cannabis Action Network (CAN), based in Berkeley, did the same and eventually started producing 4/20 events at the Maritime Hall in San Francisco. Other events took place on college campuses in Boulder, CO and Santa Cruz, CA.

Soon after, I met a group of guys calling themselves The Waldos at the 1997 CAN event. They disputed the flyer, saying they invented 420! Their proof included posters, banners, and letters with 420 references. The Waldos said they'd smoke at 4:20 in the early '70s when they attended San Rafael High School in Northern California's Marin County. Despite others who made similar claims, *High Times* hailed The Waldos as the founders of 420. That's the story that is now regularly told during the yearly 420 news cycle in April. The media usually recounts my flyer story and The Waldos' claim.

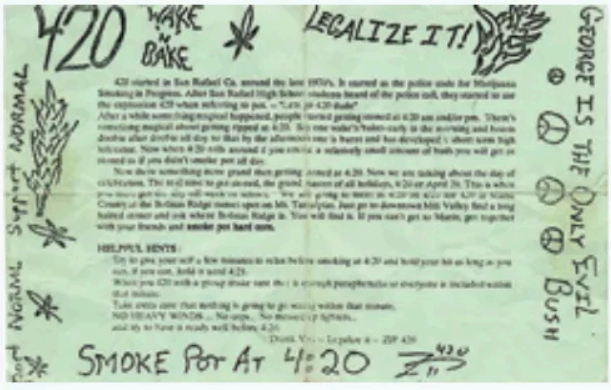
It's hard to know what's true about 420 history. To me, it was a big game of stoner telephone that played out in the Bay Area, resulting in this increasingly popular phenomenon and celebration. Rather than credit one person or a group, I prefer to acknowledge the broader community that gave rise to 420.

While The Waldos continue to receive credit for the concept, the 4/20 events that take place annually are due to the flyer and not The Waldos. It clearly calls for a day of celebration that has now expanded into multiple days of events, depending on when 4/20 falls. Major concerts, festivals, and sundry events take place on 4/20, making it the official stoner holiday. 7/10 is another effort to band stoners together on one day.

4/20 has also become the biggest cannabis retail day of the year. According to *Headset*, "4/20 in 2025 was a uniquely nuanced event. Falling on a Sunday—and coinciding with Easter—the holiday evolved into more of a three-day sales opportunity. While 4/20 and Easter Sunday won't align again until 2088, 2025 offered valuable lessons for the future."

"Oregon, which posted a 165% increase in sales on the holiday, also recorded one of the largest relative jumps in average discount. This bold departure from typical retailer offerings clearly captured customers' attention and helped fuel the surge in sales."

So, make sure to take advantage of deals during the 4/20 holiday and stock up for the rest of the month, May and beyond. It's all because of a little flyer, a bunch of stoners and the general belief that cannabis deserves its own holiday.



Steve Bloom is a former editor of High Times *and current publisher of CelebStoner.com. Join his group at Patreon (patreon.com/celebstoner)*

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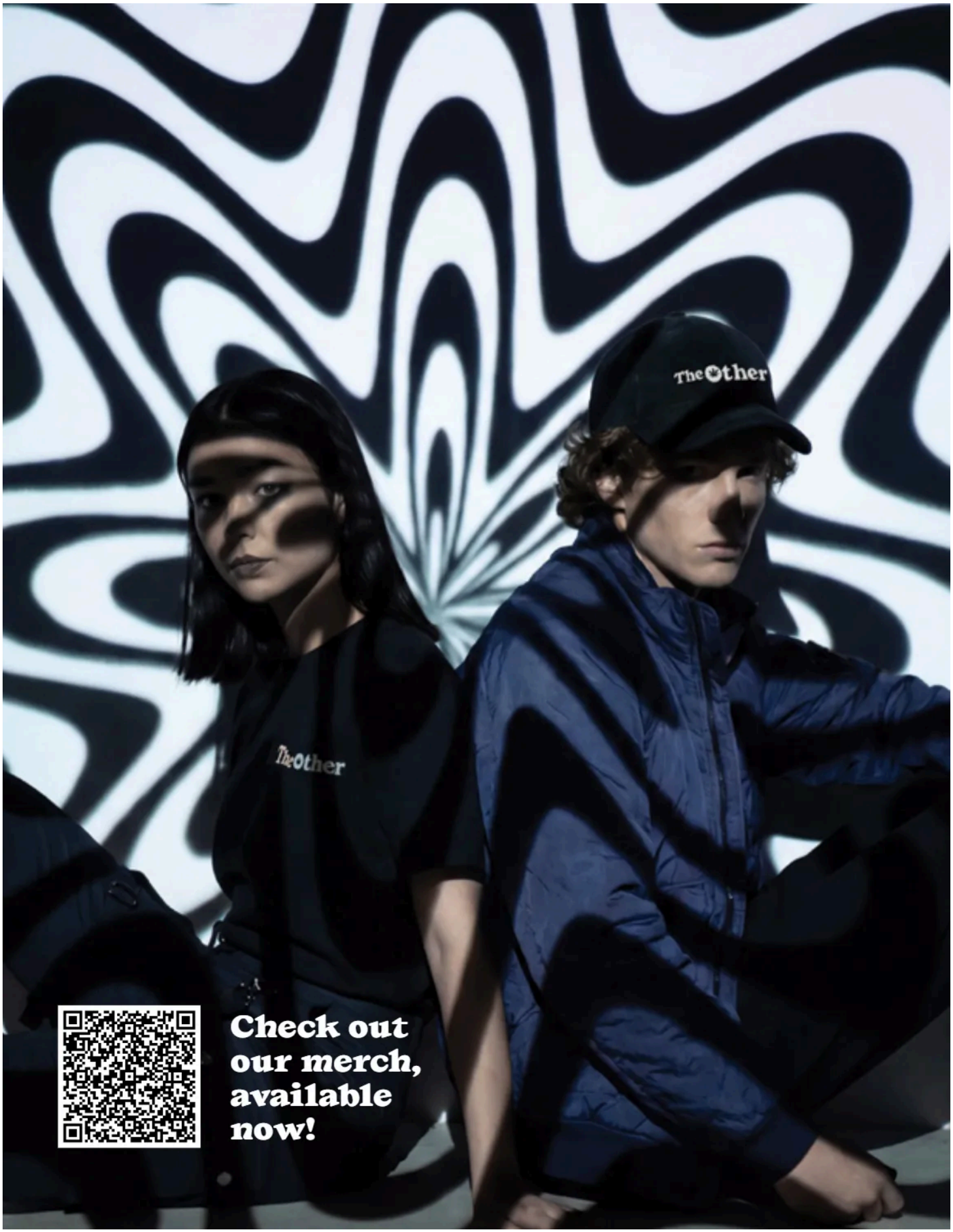
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STORY ONE

"The Perfect Spring Session"

It was a _____ (ADJECTIVE) Saturday morning in _____ (NYC NEIGHBORHOOD, HV TOWN, OR LI VILLAGE), and I knew it was finally time for the first outdoor session of spring. I grabbed my _____ (NOUN) and headed to my favorite spot near the _____ (LANDMARK OR PARK). My friend _____ (CELEBRITY NAME) was already there, looking incredibly _____ (ADJECTIVE) in a pair of _____ (COLOR) sunglasses. "I brought something special," they said, pulling out a _____ (ADJECTIVE) pre-roll from _____ (CANNABIS BRAND OR DISPENSARY). We sparked up and the flavor was absolutely _____ (ADJECTIVE)—notes of _____ (FRUIT) and _____ (SPICE OR HERB) with a finish that tasted like _____ (FOOD). "This is a _____ (STRAIN NAME) cross," my friend explained _____ (ADVERB). "It's _____ (NUMBER) percent THC." Within minutes, I felt _____ (EMOTION) and suddenly had an uncontrollable urge to _____ (VERB). We spent the next _____ (NUMBER) hours _____ (VERB ENDING IN -ING) while listening to _____ (MUSICIAN OR BAND) on a _____ (ADJECTIVE) Bluetooth speaker. By sunset, we'd eaten _____ (NUMBER) _____ (PLURAL FOOD) from the _____ (TYPE OF CUISINE) restaurant down the street and agreed this was the most _____ (ADJECTIVE) spring day in the history of _____ (PLACE). I looked at my friend and said, "Same time _____ (DAY OF THE WEEK)?" They smiled and replied, "_____ (EXCLAMATION)! But next time, bring the _____ (NOUN)."

STORY TWO

"My First Dispensary Visit"

I'd been meaning to visit a dispensary ever since my _____ (FAMILY MEMBER) told me it was more _____ (ADJECTIVE) than a _____ (TYPE OF STORE). So last _____ (DAY OF THE WEEK), I walked into _____ (DISPENSARY NAME) on _____ (STREET NAME) feeling equal parts _____ (EMOTION) and _____ (EMOTION). The budtender, whose name was _____ (FIRST NAME), greeted me with a _____ (ADJECTIVE) smile and asked what I was looking for. "Something that makes me feel like I'm _____ (VERB ENDING IN -ING) on a _____ (NOUN) made of _____ (MATERIAL)," I said, trying to sound _____ (ADJECTIVE). They nodded _____ (ADVERB) and pulled out a jar of _____ (STRAIN NAME). "This one's got _____ (TERPENE) in it," they said. "It smells like _____ (SOMETHING YOU'D SMELL) mixed with _____ (SOMETHING YOU'D SMELL)." I took a sniff and my _____ (BODY PART) immediately felt _____ (ADJECTIVE). "I'll take _____ (NUMBER) grams," I announced with the confidence of a _____ (OCCUPATION) ordering _____ (BEVERAGE) at a _____ (ADJECTIVE) cocktail bar. The total came to $ _____ (NUMBER), which was _____ (ADVERB) reasonable. Walking out with my little _____ (COLOR) bag, I felt like the They replied, "I did. You were too busy _____ (VERB ENDING IN -ING)."

BUD OF THE VALLEY

Celebrating Your Favorite Budtenders

by Alan Greenwald

Spring brings our sixth installment of "Bud of the Valley," where we continue to celebrate the budtenders who guide and inspire cannabis journeys across the Hudson Valley and NYC. Thanks to your votes, we're proud to introduce Serenity Warner of Two Buds Dispensary as this season's featured standout. This ongoing series highlights the expertise, passion, and community spirit shaping New York's cannabis culture—keep casting your votes as we recognize the local heroes behind the counter!

For Serenity, budtending is rooted in a simple belief: cannabis improves people's lives, and education is how you help them get there. Since joining Two Buds Dispensary, she has become a trusted guide for first-timers and seasoned consumers alike—someone who takes the time to understand what a customer actually needs and finds genuine satisfaction when the recommendation lands. "I like being able to change people's perspectives, answer their questions, and make sure they leave feeling confident in what they chose"

Why is cannabis important to you?

Cannabis is important to me because it helps people in so many different ways. Some people use it to relax, some for sleep, some for creativity, and some just to enjoy the experience socially. I like being part of an industry where we can educate people and help them find something that actually improves their lifestyle.

Share a cannabis moment that would be of interest to our readers.

Being part of the legal cannabis industry in New York has been a big moment for me. Watching the shift from stigma to normalization has been amazing. Now people from all walks of life come into the dispensary curious and open to learning. Being able to guide them through that experience is something I really enjoy.

Describe a typical day at Two Buds Dispensary.

A typical day at Two Buds is busy, fast-paced, and all about helping customers figure out what products are right for them—whether they're experienced consumers or first-timers. There's a lot of conversation, and a lot of good energy in the shop.

What's your most memorable sales experience?

One of the most memorable experiences is when someone comes in skeptical or unsure and leaves really happy with what they got. When they come back and tell us the product worked exactly how they hoped, that's always a great feeling. It shows that the recommendations and the time spent helping them actually made a difference.

Where do you see the cannabis market heading in the next few years?

I think the cannabis market is just getting started, especially in New York. As the industry grows, we're going to see more innovation, better products, and more focus on education. People are becoming more interested in quality and understanding what they're consuming, and dispensaries are going to keep playing a big role in that.

Want to nominate your favorite budtender? Scan the QR code:

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